

Defining *Zeren*: Cultural Politics in a Chinese Village

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Abstract

This ethnography is writing about the popular resistance of villagers in post-reform China. It focuses on the political discourse of villagers who imagine, create and transmit it in everyday life. When they carry out resistance to the state, they speak about how they view their government, what the ideal government-villager relationship is, what the principle of justice and equity is, as well as what their relations with their family, kin and village are, and how they view the good life.

In their everyday practice, the evidence shows that there is an elaborate and pervasive principle of social contract or reciprocity, which underlies everyday social relationships. This principle is not only applied to person to person (e.g. villager and villager, villagers and cadres), it is also extended to the relationship between state and villagers. But the findings also tell that this principle is not an external norm/rule or institution/system which is static and unchangeable. It is transformed and reproduced by the villagers in everyday practices. The villagers strategically defined the meaning of *zeren* in terms of social contract for their own interest. When the state or the cadres violate their principle of *zeren*, villagers carry out resistance.

In Ku Village, villagers' resistance is always in everyday form in order to avoid open confrontation and direct challenge to the state, because such open and organized activities are still dangerous and will probably be met with armed force and bloodshed in socialist China. In their resistance, they are capable of formulating the rationale for their action discursively via defining and redefining the *zeren* of the government and their relationship with the state. They draw upon the memory and a rich variety of information from different sources for constructing their models of "good government" and "good cadre", with which they judge the government and local cadres, and then justify their resistance to the state policies.

In post-reform China, collecting taxes, imposing fees and enforcing birth control have become the main arenas of conflict between state and villagers. The village cadres are always situated in a dilemma, which formulates an important characteristic of Chinese local politics. On the one hand, they have to implement the state policy; on the other hand, they do not want to hurt the personal relationship with the villagers because they are also bound by the principle of social reciprocity. So

normally, they collude with the villagers and keep “one eye opened and one eye closed”. At the specific historical moment, however, some village cadres collude with the state and do things against the interest of the villagers.

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Chapter 1: Culture Domination and Popular Resistance -- Rethinking Peasant Politics in Contemporary China

The train was running on the way to Mei County. I could not fall asleep because I had to get off at Meizhou station at 5 a.m. in the early morning. I was afraid that I would miss the station. I impatiently looked at my watch several times. I knew the train would arrive at Meixian soon. At 4:50 a.m., the train loudspeakers warned the passengers to prepare for getting off at Meizhou station. The train was slowing down soon after. It arrived at the station. I followed the flow of crowd and went out to the station. The waiting room was full of people and was shrouded in strong smoke. Coming out from the waiting room, I found even more people outside the station. Many women there carried the luggage for the passengers; many taxi drivers were waiting for business; many children peddled loudly. The railway from Meizhou to Shenzhen and Shantou was just completed in June of 1996.¹ It was seen as a great result of gaige kaifang (reform and opening door) under Deng's era. Railway construction was always treated by the people as one of the important indicators of modernization, and one of the important factors to industrialization. As the local newspaper I read stated, the new railway will promote the economic development of Mei county and its future will be glorious and magnificent.

Brother Ming discovered me among the crowd. He, who is about 43 years old, is my uncle's oldest son. Brother Ming is one of my important informants. He grew up in Ku Village - the village where I stayed, and joined Renmin Jiefangjun (People's Liberation Army) when he was 18. After release from the military service, he was assigned by the government to work at the Commission for Inspecting Discipline (jilu jiancha weiyuanhui). Xiahai (doing business) has become the popular phenomena in China. Most departments of the local government in China now set up their companies and enterprises, and their staffs do the business for the companies. Like Brother Ming, they have double identities -- state cadres and businessmen. Brother Ming sent me to Ku Village by using his danwei's (work unit) foreign imported car. At the time of setting out to my fieldwork, I still was quite uncertain what would

¹ . Shantou and Shenzhen have been two Special Economic Zone of China since the late 1970s.

happen in the field. I had many questions in my mind, but I did not know whether my questions would make sense to the villagers in their life. To me, everything seemed to be important, everything seemed to be irrelevant.

In the afternoon, our car passed through Songkou Bridge (see Picture 1.1). I knew I had arrived at the Songnan town which was the township of Ku Village. My father told me many stories about this bridge when I was very young. Brother Ming told me that we would soon get to Ku Village.

Running into the main street of Songnan town, our car was forced to slow down as too many people were walking in street without watching out for cars. The car horn was useless here. Slowing down the car gave me an opportunity to look around the street through the window of the car. Songnan town was totally different from the one in my memories of childhood: Many new buildings, many motorbikes, many new shops opened. Fashion dress shops, Karaoke bars, electrical equipment shops, furniture shops, restaurants, and popular music shops signified that Songkou has become "modernized" in some sense, at least in the Chinese government's sense.

It was a xuri (periodic market day). Villagers from different villages came to the free market for buying their daily necessities or selling goods they produced according to the practices of hundreds years ago. Free market activities were prohibited in Mao's period because they symbolized capitalism. But the rural reform in the late 1970s have brought Chinese peasants back to the market, no matter whether under the banner of socialism or capitalism. The abandonment of the communes, and the recurrence of family farming and free markets, has freed Chinese peasants from the constraints of collective agriculture. They diversify their production away from the singular emphasis on grain production and exchange their products and surplus in the re-opened markets.

We passed the market where there was plenty of "heat and noise" (renao). It was packed with people, filled with different voices, and clashingly colorful (see Picture 1.2). I got out of the car and walked in the market, took out my camera and took photo as other anthropologists have done. Vegetables, fruit, pork, chicken, seafood, and many other goods were sold in the market. Some stalls were permanent, and some were temporary (see Picture 1.3 and 1.4). People bargained the price with their best effort. I looked up and found there were several yellow

boards hung under the roof of the market, on which were written the propaganda slogans of the government, e.g. "It is honour to pay tax and fees, shameful to evade tax and fees" (*jiaona shuifei guangrong, toulou shuifei kechi*).

Suddenly, I heard some big noises from the other side. It attracted the attention of the people in the fair. I thought it was a quarrel, which happens often in the street and market in China. More and more people went to investigate what was happening. A pregnant woman with arms akimbo was swearing at a man in the market area. "I won't pay the fee!" she angrily screeched, "you plainly bully me!" "Who bullies you! It is the regulation," the man said. The woman screeched continuously, "Okay, show me the document of policy. Which regulation allows you to collect this fee?" The man replied, "Who are you? You have no right to read the document." The woman was very angry and challenged the man again, "I sell my vegetable every *xuri*. Why you didn't collect the fee before?" The man calmly answered, "It is the new policy of our government. Do you dare to resist the policy?" The woman insisted to refuse the payment, "Okay, ask your supervisor to come here. I'll ask him if I have to pay so much fee!" The man said, "Don't be so fierce, if you don't pay the fee, you can't sell your vegetable here no matter who collects the fee. I just handle the matter impartially (*binggong banli*)."

More and more people gathered here, many pairs of eyes followed their movement. No one spoke. The pregnant woman continued to shout: "Don't cheat me. I don't believe you! Ask your supervisor to talk with me. Everyone knows what you are. Shameless!" Then she turned to the surrounding people. She began to explain what happened and asked them to have it out. The surrounding people began to judge the right and wrong between two sides. The man quickly left the crowd.

According to the people around, the woman came from one of the villages near Songkou town. Her husband was a disabled retired army-man. Now the local government faced financial problems and no more took care of the disabled and retired army-man. For her family's livelihood, she had to set up a temporary fruit stall in Songkou town and sold the fruit she produced at *xuri*. She had set up the stall for a long time. But today a man of the Industry and Commerce Bureau (ICB, Gong Shang Ju) suddenly collected the tax from her. He asked her to pay two yuan per day. She felt it was unreasonable (*bu heli*) to pay that amount because she could not even earn two yuan in a day.

After a while, the man came with a older man who was the supervisor of ICB. He told that she had to pay the fee in accordance with regulations. But because her husband was a disabled retired army-man, she was allowed to pay two jiao per day in the name of giving appropriate preferential treatment (zhaogu). In the end she paid the stall fees as she said two jiao was reasonable (heli) and fair enough.

The crowd, which had gathered to watch the fun, dispersed. I also got in my car and went to Ku Village. Brother Ming, told me yesterday was a rainy day; he worried about the road from Songnan town to Ku Village because the road became muddy and rugged after rain. We went from the wide township cement road to the narrow mud village path. Our car bumped seriously. The path was indeed muddy and rugged. Several times our car almost got stuck in the mud. Brother Ming was filled with anger at the muddy road and cursed the local government and the village cadres. He questioned about the responsibility and obligation (zeren) of the local government. He said: "Every year they collect the money from the households for paving the way. But year after year the way remains the same." I did not pay too much attention to his grumbling. I thought it was quite normal when people faced that situation. Our car was very dirty when we got to Ku Village.

I settled down at my uncle's house. I called my uncle "Uncle Si" because he is the fourth child of the family. He was about 70. As he said, he had experienced dynasty (chaodai) of the Guomindang (National Party) and the Gongchandang (Communist Party). During dinner, when chatting with my uncle about what happened in the afternoon in the town market, he smiled and said: "Hok-Bin, today's Gongchandang is different from before. They try their best to make money without concerning about the sheng si (life and death) of people . They create this policy today, tomorrow they create another policy. Gongchandang is good at naming. There are so many tu zhengce (local policies) in China." He also told me that "two yuan" was set by the low-level staff without the permission of the government. The local staff often arbitrarily decided the amount of the fee and then put the money in their pocket. During dinner, I also mentioned about the poor village road. Uncle Si cursed the local government as did Brother Ming. He said: "It is the government's zeren (responsibility and obligation) to construct the road for the people. But they always complain about the shortage of finances. Okay, now we provide the financial

expenditure. But in the end, although we give the money every year, the way is worse than before. I don't know how they (local cadres) use the money..."

* * * *

Language is not an abstract system of normative forms but rather a concrete heteroglot conception of the world. All words have the "taste" of a profession, a genre, a tendency, a party, a particular work, a particular person, a generation, an age group, the day and hour. Each word tastes of the context and contexts in which it has lived its socially charged life (M. M. Bakhtin, 1981:292).

Everyday language has been an important area of sociological or anthropological inquiry because it is recognized as the important vehicles or media, which operate as symbols, to carry meanings and represent meanings the people wish to represent. To use another metaphor, as Stuart Hall says, language functions as signs which represent our concepts, ideas and feelings (Hall, 1997: 5). It is a signifying practice we participate within daily life, consciously and unconsciously. The propaganda slogans written on the yellow boards hung under the roof of Songkou market is a sort of language with which the government ideologically shaped the reality of citizenship the people inhabit. The grumbling of my relatives is a kind of discourse the villagers use to refer and construct their knowledge of government or connotation of government. The dispute at the market is another way of negotiating power through everyday language, in which different parties read/ re-read, decode/ re-decode, and interpret/ re-interpret the "policy", "regulation" and "responsibility". How to make sense of everyday language is always the most difficult work for an ethnographer as there are many voices, sometimes consistent, sometimes contradictory, and sometimes not understandable. Contextualizing everyday language seems to be a relatively reliable way of interpretation. To understand the slogans, disputes, grumbings, sensations and feelings, or other events and stories in my fieldwork, I think I have to locate these language and practice in the historical transformation of China in the reform era.

During the first decade of reform in China, one of the most important questions was whether the socialist government could earn credit and support from the Chinese via economic reform. In the first years, it seemed possible, especially in the

countryside, because one of the most important and much publicized repercussions of the reform was the initial dramatic and then more gradual rise in economic opportunities, cash incomes and standards of living among peasant households. In the 1980s, the number of newly rich and in particular “*wan yuan hu*” (ten thousand yuan peasant households) became the chief rationale and criterion for measuring the efficacy of reforms. Officially, the association of riches with reform permeated government reports, policy documents and speeches all constituted the overriding criterion of policy success. “Get rich quick”, “getting rich is glorious”, “riches for all” were slogans and popular rhetoric which encouraged widespread perception of economic prosperity and hopeful emulation of “ten thousand yuan” households.

By the decade of 1990s, there was a shift in both popular and official preoccupation with riches and prosperity to economic and social security or the maintenance of incomes. Although it was the socialist government’s imagination that the *gaige kaifang* would “let small parts of people get rich first” and then “riches for all”, it was also clear that not all regions and households had been in a position to take advantage, or were able to continue to take advantage of the new opportunities, or had benefited similarly from the reforms. The improved livelihood or new prosperity of Chinese, especially in countryside, was eroded by rising costs, inflation, additional imposed fee and taxes, and the government’s inability to purchase contracted grain or provide for necessary services. Under the new financial arrangement, the local government funds became independent. In the absence of central allocation, some local government funds were depleted and there was an increase in the numbers and amount of local taxes, fees levied and user-charges for service exacted on the villagers which not only affected the cultivation of land and agricultural production but also affected the ability of individual peasant households to support elderly and incapacitated family members and to meet the ever-rising costs of educating their children and of family health care. For the poor, the elderly and the ill, there were few guarantees of little more than a minimal safety net with allowances in cash or kind insufficient to support livelihood or even match those formerly provided by the collective. Encountering such insecurity and intensive extraction from the local government, Chinese peasants voiced unhappiness and took action to resist the

unreasonable state policies.² They questioned the responsibility and obligation (*zeren*) of the government in everyday discourse and challenged the legitimacy and authority of those irresponsible local government and local cadres in action.

The transformation or economic development of rural China during the first decade of reform have been well documented, but what has received less attention nationally and internationally has been the new sense of risk and new mood of insecurity increasingly experienced by many Chinese peasants in the post-reform era, especially those outside of the richer suburban and fertile regions. The aim of this study is to explore this hidden issue. It will focus on the peasants' new sense of risk and insecurity in the post-reform era, and how the peasants actively respond to the new risks and ongoing struggle to build a decent livelihood through manipulating their invented strategies and tactics. To conceptualize the whole project, this chapter aims to re-examine the conventional account of peasant and peasant society, and other related theoretical discussions of domination and resistance.

1.1. Peasants and Peasant Society in Question

Peasants do not write their own history nor is it written for them. It is written about and, often, without them. Their voice is barely ever heard at those places where decision are made about policies and profits. It is the interests and images of non-peasants which define the ways the 'Peasant Question' is being put and resolved in economic and political planning by state and agribusiness, impinging deeply on the peasants' existence in the modern world (Shanin, 1987: 381)

They were the voiceless ones, though they and their kind made four-fifth of all China's people. They were the ones ... abused by overlords and taxed by governments. They were the ones who were at the mercy of famine and flood (Buck in Huang, 1994:2).

Peasants are traditionally constructed and construed as powerless and voiceless (e.g. Marx, 1987; Gorky, 1987; Fanon, 1987). Whether the peasants are in China or elsewhere, the impression of peasants as passively receiving external ideologies, or at best as reacting to external initiatives, is widely distributed in

² . It is often reported that there are an increasing number of violent clashes and rural unrest in the post reform era (e.g. Li & O'Brien, 1996; Zhong, 1997; *Ming Bao Daily News*, 1997; *South China Morning Post*, 1997; *Apple Daily*, 1997).

academic writings. As Shanin and Buck indicate, peasants are treated as ones without history. They are regarded as a passive and powerless social class incapable of enforcing their class interests in their own name, and unable to represent and speak for themselves. Moreover, they are powerless to organize themselves. So they are always at others' mercy (Shanin, 1987; Buck, 1949 in Huang 1994).

Classical Marxism would like to attribute peasants' powerlessness to economic factors. To Marx, the household-based mode of production constrains the small holding peasants to enter manifold relations with one another. In Marx's famous comment on the French peasantry, he states:

In this way, the great mass of the French nation is formed by simple addition of homologous magnitudes, much as potatoes in a sack form a sack of potatoes... In so far as there is merely a local interconnection among these small-holding peasants, and the identity of their interests begets no community, no national bond and no political organization among them, they do not form a class. They [peasants] are consequently incapable of enforcing their class interest in their own name, whether through a parliament or through a convention. They cannot represent themselves, they must be represented. Their representative must at the same time appear as their master, as an authority over them, as an unlimited governmental power that protects them against the other classes and sends them rain and sunshine from above. The political influence of the small holding peasants, therefore, finds its final expression in the executive power subordinating society to itself (Marx, 1987:320).

Marx's "potatoes analogy" tells us two things. First, peasants cannot represent their own interests, indeed they have to be represented by others. To traditional Marxists, the working class or proletarians often suffer from false consciousness because ideology is shaped by those who control the means of intellectual production. More frequently, the working class or proletarians are seen as having accepted the ideas of the dominant class, ideas that represent the dominant position and thus distort actual working-class living experience. The political power of the dominant class depends on the material conditions that keep the subordinate class split up in isolated fragments, unable to formulate their own class interests. Second, the peasants, emblematic of the oppressed class under the feudal autocracy, constitute a majority of the population but are unable to mobilize as a unified group because of the limitation of their mode of production -- small holding peasants economy, which isolates them from one another instead of bringing them into mutual intercourse. Thus they have no

more conscious unity than "potatoes in a sack." Marx expects industrial workers to form a victorious class because the growth of large factories is breaking down their isolation and brings them together. In this way the progress of capitalism is producing its 'own grave-diggers' (Marx & Engel in Collins edited, 1994).

A main problem in Marxist theory is that there is a split between "objective" conditions of oppression and "subjective" consciousness of this oppression, between ideology and behaviors, between economic and political spheres. Politics, ideology, and culture could only be understood as a reflection of the material "base" or relation of production or class relation. Resistance is viewed mainly as an organized struggle by subordinate groups informed by a coherent opposite ideology which can only be developed as a result of a certain level of class consciousness in terms of exploitation and oppression. So resistance in classical Marxist accounts is dominated by open confrontation in the form of organized large-scale rebellion and revolution. This is often criticized as economic determinism (Scott, 1989; Foucault, 1991; Giddens, 1987; Collin, 1994).

The description of the powerlessness of the peasants for revolution and the prediction of victory for the working class is also due to the framework of Marxist historical materialism which basically is influenced by the modernist worldview.³ With the modernization theory, they share similar problems to visualize development in term of a progressive and evolutionary change that society will automatically move from a simple, stagnant, unproductive and backward 'traditional society' towards a technologically and institutionally complex 'modern society'. In the developmentalist sense, there will be an increasing involvement in commodity market and a series of interventions involving the transfer of technology, knowledge, resources and organizational form from the more 'developed' societies to the 'less developed', 'under developed', 'third world' societies. In the economic sense, traditional economy, i.e. peasant economy, will be gradually transformed from small-scale and communal

³. The modernist view has strongly influenced all the academic disciplines for about two centuries, which was structurally consistent with empiricist epistemology, in which people assumed that human nature is a thinking substance and the human person is an autonomous rational subject. Moreover, people also pictured the physical world as a machine, the laws and regularity of which could be discerned by the human mind. Knowledge in modern mind was also assumed as certain, objective, and good. Under these basic assumptions, people optimistically believed that they were able to view the world as unconditioned observers. The good knowledge discovered by the rational and objective

subsistence farmer economy to large scale and market-oriented economy. Rural people in historical development are often construed as the passive victims of capitalist market economy (Shanin and Alvi, 1982; Long, 1993; Schuurman, 1993; Escobar, 1995; Kearney, 1996).

However, through much of the 1960s and 1970s, a somewhat romanticized vision of peasantry came out, which was very much a product of a post World War II era that had seen rural revolutionary movements, both successful and failed, throughout much of the Third World. As Michael Adas criticizes, this romanticized vision "overcorrected for an earlier consensus that peasants were passive, hopelessly divided by 'amoral familism,' and resigned to oppression due to their acceptance of a 'limited good' view of the world" (Adas, 1992:127). It walked to another extreme to see the peasantry as a class prone to confrontational protest and highly susceptible to mobilization in the revolutionary movements (Adas, 1992). I think the passive and revolutionary extremes of conceptualizing peasant societies and response basically are two sides of one coin, which follow the same view of domination and revolution of conventional Marxism.

1.2. Hegemony, Power and Cultural Domination

Gramsci is the one who rose challenge of the traditional Marxist view of power relationship. His concept of "hegemony" or "ideological hegemony" breaks through the traditional Marxist analysis of power which stresses the role of objective condition/ economic determinants and assumes that politics, ideology and culture can be understood as a reflection of the material base (Gramsci, 1991). To Gramsci, a material sense of domination is not enough to portray the power relation in modern industrial society. He was eager to provide the answer to one of the central questions of twentieth-century Marxism -- Why did the Western European working class not become revolutionary? Why did it not attack the roots of capitalist control? He believed that capitalist order remains stable because the great masses of the population accept it as necessary and spontaneously consent, which is imposed on social life by the dominant fundamental group (1971:12). In Gramsci's view, political dominance

scientific method could unlock the secrets of the universe and master nature, and create a better, modern, civil and enlightened world for "all" human society.

not only rests on coercion, but the operation of power, and their success depends on consent from below. He uses the concept "hegemony" to understand how political society and civil society contribute to the production of meaning and value which in turn produce, direct and maintain the consent of the various strata of society to that status quo. These political society and civil society include the whole range of structure and activities like trade unions, education, churches, family and micro-structure of the practices of everyday life (Bogg, 1976; Holub, 1992).

For Gramsci, if the ruling elite/class seeks to perpetuate their power, wealth, and status, they have to popularize their own philosophy, culture, morality, attitudes, value, beliefs and render them unchallengeable. In the end, the dominant group's interests are accepted as universal. Hegemony in this sense might be defined as an "organizing principle" or worldview, that is diffused by agencies of ideological control and socialization into every sphere of daily life. As a result, the prevailing consciousness is internalized by the broad masses, and becomes part of "common sense" or part of the natural order of things. Chantal Mouffe further interprets Gramsci's thought that the achievement of hegemony was not only a simple process by which the dominant group imposed its own ideology on other groups; at the same time, the hegemonic ideology can make use of ideological elements from diverse sources, even from the ideology of those who are dominated (Mouffe, 1979:193).

In broad sense, similar to Gramsci, Foucault also argues that power is not imposed from above, but the operations of power and their success depend on consent from below. For both of them, power is produced and reproduced in the interstices of everyday life and permeate the individual's understanding of the world. As Foucault asserted:

When I think of the mechanics of power, I think of its capillary form of existence, of the extent to which power seeps into the very grain of individuals, reaches right into their bodies, permeates their gestures, their postures, what they say, how they learn to live and work with other people (Foucault, 1980).

To Foucault, the main question to ask is "how power is exercised" and "by what means" rather than "what is power and where does it come from". In a conversation between Foucault and Gilles Deleuze, he clearly stated;

Everywhere that power exists, it is being exercised. No one, strictly speaking, has an official right to power; and yet it is always exerted in a particular direction, with some people on one side and some on the other. It is often difficult to say who holds power in a precise sense, but it is easy to see who lacks power (Foucault, 1977:213).

So, power is conceived by him no more as a property or a possession of a dominant class, state, or sovereign which can be accumulated, but as a strategy. That means when someone has power, it does not mean that others are without it. As de Certeau (1984) says, Foucault's power has no possessor, no privileged place, no superiors or inferiors, no repressive activity or dogmatism. So in Foucault's view, a zero-sum model of power is misplaced.

In Foucault's version, it is also not enough to use the concept "state" to analyze the power and domination in our society, because to him power is not conceived to be imposed from "the apex of social hierarchy", nor derived from a fundamental binary opposition between a ruling and ruled class or state and society, but it rather operates in a "capillary fashion" from below. He says:

To pose the problem in terms of the State means to continue posing it in terms of sovereign and sovereignty, that is to say in terms of law. If one describes all these phenomena of power as dependent on the State apparatus, this means grouping them as essentially repressive: the Army as power of death, police and justice as punitive instances, etc. I don't want to say that the State isn't important; what I want to say is that relations of power, and hence the analysis that must be made of them necessarily extend beyond the limits of the State... because the State, for all the omnipotence of its apparatuses, is far from being able to occupy the whole field of actual power relations, and further because the State can only operate on the basis of other, already existing power relations. The State is superstructure in relation to a whole series of power networks that invest the body, sexuality, the family, kinship, knowledge, technology and so forth (Foucault, 1980:122).

We do not say that the State is not important and that coercive domination does not exist (especially in the case of China), we just refuse to reduce power to only negative control of the will of others through prohibition, repression, and coercion. This also does not mean that repression and domination do not exist in our society, but that such a notion of power is inadequate for reaching an understanding of modern relations of power. As Foucault states:

If power were never anything but repressive, if it never did anything but to say no, do you really think one would be brought to obey it?

What makes power hold good, what makes it accepted, is simply the fact that it doesn't only weigh on us as a force that says no, but that it traverses and produces things, it induces pleasure, forms knowledge, produces discourse (Foucault, 1980: 118-119).

So the major contribution of Foucault to our understanding of power is his assertion of the productive dimension of power or the relationship between knowledge and power. Power is productive in the sense that it constructs human subjects who act and think in a certain way willingly. In Foucault's whole project, his interest lies in the study of how human beings govern themselves and others through establishing the regime of truth. Foucault considers that power cannot be exercised except through the production of truth. Through the establishment of "regime of truth" and "regime of rationality", sovereign subjects can govern themselves and others. Power constitutes rules and procedures as well as "true discourses" which guide and legitimate their activities, shape their bodies, their acts, attitudes, and modes of everyday behavior.⁴

These practices lead to the development of modes of objectification that transform human beings into subjects, and to the production of a disciplinary society. According to Rabinow, the modes of objectification include "dividing practices", "scientific classification" and "subjectification" (Foucault, 1980; Rabinow, 1984). In the dividing practices, "the subject is objectified by a process of division either within himself or from others". The purpose of division and classification is for rejection.⁵ The "scientific classification" arises from the modes of inquiry which try to give themselves the status of sciences. It further legitimates the dividing practices in the name of scientific truth and knowledge. This is why Foucault says that power produces knowledge, that power and knowledge directly imply one another, and that there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge,

⁴. In Foucault's analysis, these social procedures of exclusion and prohibition, comprising the forbidden speech of politics and sexuality, the division between reason and its other, madness, and the distinction between "truth" and "falsehood", form the way in which knowledge is put to work in our society (Foucault, 1981).

⁵. According to Rabinow, the most famous examples from Foucault's work "are the isolation of lepers during the Middle Ages; the confinement of the poor, the insane, and vagabonds in the great catch-all Hospital General in Paris in 1656; the new classifications of disease and the associated practices of clinical medicine in early-nineteenth-century France; the rise of modern psychiatry and its entry into the hospitals, prisons, and clinics throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries; and finally the medicalization, stigmatization, and normalization of sexual deviance in modern Europe" (Rabinow, 1984:8).

nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations. Furthermore, Foucault is concerned with subjectification -- "the way a human being turns himself or herself into a subject". In the process of self-formation/subjectification, the person is active. It allows individuals to effect, by their own means, various operations on their own bodies, souls, thought and conduct, and in such a manner as to transform themselves, modify themselves, and attain a state of perfection and happiness. The art of government is to make the regulation of the self come to be combined with the centralized power of the state. Through the "technologies of the self", individuals seek to effect a transformation of themselves to meet the rules of conduct and fulfill the domination of power.

1.3. Resistance and Discourse in Everyday Life

Influenced by the trend of post-structuralism, in recent years, conventional studies of peasant politics, which are dominated by accounts of open confrontations in the form of large scale rebellions and revolutions, have been critically challenged. Theoretically, conventional studies of peasant politics is greatly influenced by the Marxist paradigm and the view of structuralism,⁶ in which peasants as a subordinate group are usually treated as passive recipients of intervention and seen as disembodied social categories within structure of domination. But to post-structuralists, actors (individual or social group) are regarded as having the capacity to process social experience and to devise ways of coping with life, even under the most extreme condition of coercion. As Bourdieu states,

If one ignores the dialectical relationship between the objective structures and the cognitive and motivating structures which they produce and which tend to reproduce them, if one forgets that these objective structures are transformed by historical practices and are constantly reproduced and transformed by historical practices whose productive principle is itself the product of the structures which it consequently tends to reproduce, then one is condemned to reduce the

⁶ The structuralism is greatly influenced by the classical linguistics. Saussure's distinction between 'language' and 'speech', which is at the heart of structuralist, Levi-Strauss' thought. For Saussure, language is a social institution in which the relationship between word and object, signifier and signified, is arbitrary. Language as a system exists independently of individually created speech acts, each of which is contingent. Each speaker, following the rules and definitions of language, creates unique acts of speech, unique utterances. Language as an arbitrary is completely separate from speech, created voluntarily within the rules of the system (Feierman, 1990).

relationship between the different social agencies...to the logical formula enabling any one of them to be derived from any other (Bourdieu, 1977: 83).

Each agent, wittingly or unwittingly, willy nilly, is a producer and reproducer of objective meaning (Bourdieu, 1977:79).

Giddens also holds the similar view,

In following the routines of my day-to-day life I help reproduce social institutions that I played no part in bringing into being...my actions constitute the institutional conditions of actions of others, just as their actions do mine...My activities are thus embedded within and are constitutive elements of, structured properties of institutions stretching well beyond myself in time and space (Giddens, 1987:11).

So when people practice their everyday lives, they are reproducing or creating culture. They are active participants who process information and tactics in dealing with various actors and outside institutions. In process of social change, they are never passive subjects of the economic, social or institutional structure, but rather are agents whose strategies and interaction shape the outcome of development. Different patterns of social development result from the interactions, negotiations, and social struggle that take place between the several kinds of actors.

In the trend of post-structuralism, Michel de Certeau suggests a broader perspective on everyday life politics. He rejects the model of social production and action which largely focuses on the macro aspect of social process. He shifts the focus on the terrain of everyday life. For de Certeau, the "marginal majority" are nevertheless not merely passive receivers of outside domination. Albeit domination proceeds through strategies (economic, political, technological, institutions) that organize the world in ways that lead to the colonization of physical, social, and cultural environments, people "effect multiple and infinitesimal transformations of the domination forms under which they inevitably have to live and operate in order to adapt them to their own interests and, to the extent possible, to subject them to their own rules" (Escobar & Alvarez, 1992:74).⁷ He defines strategies as a way of seeking to discipline and manage people and institutions, whereas tactics are a way of constituting a sort of "anti-discipline" and "art of making" that proceed by

⁷. de Certeau gives an example that when Spanish colonized Indians, it imposed their own culture on the indigenous Indians. But the Indians often made of the rituals, representations and laws imposed on them something quite different from what their conquerors had in mind.

manipulating imposed knowledge and symbols at favourable moments (de Certeau, 1984:xix).

Adopting a post-structuralist view, the concept of "everyday resistance" and "avoidance protest" has developed to reassess the approach of peasant politics. Similar to de Certeau's concept "Tactics", in James Scott's *Weapons of the Weak*, Scott argues that much of the politics of peasant/ subordinate groups fall into the category of "everyday forms of resistance" which includes such acts as foot-dragging, dissimulation, false compliance, feigned ignorance, desertion, pilfering, smuggling, poaching, arson, slander, sabotage, surreptitious assault and murder, anonymous threats, and so forth. The striking feature of everyday resistance is that

they require little or no coordination or planning; they make use of implicit understandings and informal networks; they often represent a form of individual self-help; they typically avoid any direct, symbolic confrontation with authority (Scott, 1985:xvi).

Scott defines these action as offstage action. The purpose of such resistance techniques is to avoid notice and detection, which reflects the tactical wisdom of peasants -- working the system to their minimum disadvantage (Hobsbawm, 1973; Scott, 1985). As Scott and other scholars notice, most of the subordinate classes are not intended to destroy, or even radically alter, the political system or the social structures in which peasants or other subordinate group operate (Scott, 1985; Adas, 1992). Peasants are aware that the state directly controls the means of production and coercion, and typically forecloses open protest. Open, organized and radical confrontation will bring about a tragic outcome.⁸ So to the subordinate groups, everyday form of resistance is the most significant way and relatively safe technique peasants employed for avoiding armed force and bloodshed, and minimizing their losses. Moreover, it will increase the management cost of government since the government has to prosecute thousands of cases, raise the penalties for noncompliance, and appoint more enforcement personnel. So we can say the absence

⁸. In socialist China, as Burn points out, "state policy in most of the period tied peasants to the land. Authorities effectively prevented rural to urban migration through the household registration and rationing systems. China's leaders isolated the peasantry from itself and reduced opportunities for peasant interaction unsupervised by the party." Moreover, although authority established a nationwide network of peasants' associations, with branches organized in the village, "these organizations were effectively controlled by the party. Peasants' associations functioned chiefly as a method of transmitting party policy to the countryside" (Burn, 1988:170-171). These restrained the organized and collective action of peasants.

of formal organization and open and large-scale collective action does not imply nothing that peasants are powerless.

Everyday resistance generated in peasant society is also owing to the specific social structure of peasantry which is not suitable for them to employ the large-scale collective action, e.g. geographical dispersion, a class scattered, lacking in formal organization, lacking in organizational skills and experience and so forth. Public stage is controlled by the powerful, peasants lack a variety of political resources that allow them to influence the elite and officials, such as political campaigns, lobbying, and legal assistance by which they can influence power. So for the peasants and the subordinate group, they choose to resist offstage.

Everyday resistance is silent as a strategy, but not necessarily a silent activity. Subordinate groups sometimes achieve their resistance through discursive penetration. Sometimes they only resist only in action, and resist silently; sometimes they not only act practically, but also account for their action in words. They are capable of formulating the rationale for their action discursively. Their discourse is often inaudible. Most of the time they carry out their discourse offstage. But it does not mean that their every political discourse is always offstage. Subordinate people as strategic actors are able to create public discourse according to the environment and situation. They are also able to make radical claims in public by adopting the central terms of what might have been seen as hegemonic discourse.

In Feierman's study of Tanzania, for instance, he found that the colonial officers felt it difficult to suppress peasants' discussions of democracy, development, or the abolition of slavery because those topics were politically correct and publicly acceptable. So it made a space for a radical criticism (1990:44). The scholars of subaltern studies (Ranjit Guha and others) also share the similar argument that the subaltern groups are capable of formulating the counter-discourse.⁹ As Arnold states,

Subaltern might receive the substance of their culture from the hegemonic classes but make it their own by impregnating it with non-hegemonic values or by selecting some aspects and rejecting others...(1984:161-162).

⁹. The subaltern studies group has gone beyond Gramsci's position to argue that subaltern politics was an autonomous domain in the history of India and the peasants as subaltern groups can speak for themselves (Guha, 1988; Arnold, 1984). To Gramsci, there is an ambiguity with peasantry who are always subject to the authority of ruling groups, even when they rebel and rise up.

When E. P. Thompson studied the English working class in the eighteenth century, he also remarked that: "Whatever this hegemony may have been, it did not envelop the lives of the poor and it did not prevent them from defending their own modes of work and leisure, and forming their own rituals, their own satisfaction and view of life." So to Thompson, hegemony does not constitute a rigid, automatic and all-determining structure of domination (Thompson, 1978: 163). Raymond Williams also has similarly warned against interpreting hegemony as a 'totalizing abstraction' to be virtually equated with the absolute ideological and political domination of society. "A lived hegemony is always a process", it is not a rigid, all-encompassing, unchallenged structure, but "has continually to be renewed, recreated, defended, and modified" (Williams, 1977: 112-13). There are always non-hegemonic or counter-hegemonic values at work to resist, restrict and qualify the operations of the hegemonic order (Williams, 1977; Arnold, 1984).

Everyday language and rhetoric is recognized as a crucial important aspect to study the peasant ideology or the counter-hegemonic value, as it embodies a specific conception of the world and constitutes the means by which sentiments can be communicated and shared among the peasants. As Parkin says, rhetoric or language is "a type of ritual: it says something about the speaker, the spoken-to, and the situation, which goes beyond what is contained in the surface message" (Parkin, 1975: 114). To study the language in everyday life, Volosinov suggests that "in order to observe the phenomenon of language, both the producer and the receiver of sound and the sound itself must be placed into the social atmosphere" (1973:46). It is because "all forms of speech interchange operate in extremely close connection with the conditions of the social situation in which they occur and exhibit an extraordinary sensitivity to all fluctuations in the social atmosphere"(1973: 20).¹⁰

Studying everyday discourses of the subordinate group helps us to understand the dynamics of cultural conflict and accommodation in the process of interaction of different knowledge and worldviews. The dominant groups formulate the legitimate or normal form of knowledge and diffuse this knowledge to subordinate groups. Peasant resistance, in the sense of cultural studies, not merely involves the fighting

¹⁰. For example, in Ku Village, it was easy to find contradictions in the villagers' speech. They often sing one tune in front of the cadres, but another tune among themselves. So putting their speech in speaking context, we understand why they contradict themselves.

against the material extraction, but is the struggle of attempting to reject being enrolled in other's "projects" and get others to accept their particular frames of meaning and points of view. Peasant's everyday discourse reflect the subordinate ideology and consciousness, as well as the needs and aspirations of the peasant's own way of life. They struggle over how the past and present shall be understood and labeled, and struggle over how to define the principle of justice and equity. So through studying peasant's everyday discourse, we can make sense of what the peasants speak and understand why they undertake resistance. The studies of peasant moral economy in past twenty years have uncovered a host of principal reasons underlying peasants' resistance, such as equity, justice, and fairness, which are supposedly rooted in peasant tradition and culture. They propose that peasants resist because their norm of justice and subsistence ethics has been violated by those who intend to extract interest from them (Scott, 1976; Vlastos, 1986). This vision has been criticized as romanticizing the moral aspect of peasant society by Popkin with the approach of "rational peasant" (Popkin, 1979). But I think a purely economic-interest account or a moral account of peasant or subordinate group resistance is inadequate because peasant resistance often appears to have both a moral and a material basis (e.g. Arnold, 1984; Thompson, 1978; Feierman, 1990; Scott, 1989).

In sum, emphasis on non-confrontation and quotidian modes of peasant response has provided an important middle ground between the passive and revolutionary extremes of conceptualizing peasant societies and response. It redirects our attention to the larger context in which peasant communities operate and to their ongoing struggle to scale back the demands of the state and elite groups and thereby, retain enough of what they produce to build decent lives for themselves. It also results in an understanding of the peasant/ subordinate group's specific way of rationalizing the world and real life, and the general framework for real political activity among them.

1.4. Peasant Studies in China

In China, peasant study has been developed since the 1930s. The early China studies of peasant societies were greatly influenced by the conventional Marxism and modernist view. Due to the limitation of pages, I can only mention several classical

studies for illustrating the problems of the early village studies which were influenced by the modernist view and served for making the powerlessness of Chinese peasants.

Fei Xiao-tong was the pioneer of peasant studies in China. In his books, he stated clearly that his aims were largely those of social reconstruction and his studies were for practical purpose. He was not satisfied with the traditional scholarship that provided very little guidance for practical action in changing Chinese society. He saw the problem of China as being rooted in the poverty, unemployment and exploitation of the peasantry. He was concerned about the disintegration of the traditional social order which had given the peasants some measure of security and well-being. He and other scholars (like Zhang Zhi-yi) felt that the urgent task of social reconstruction called for the application of scientific methods to the understanding of social and economic processes. To Fei, only after fully understanding the rural society via scientific method, would reconstruction and modernization of rural China become possible. Since China was conventionally represented as a rural society, it should not be surprising to understand Chinese society via villages (Fei, 1939; Fei and Zhang, 1990; Beteille, 1987).

The first full-length study of a Chinese village, *Peasant Life in China*, was published in 1939 by Fei Xiao-tong.¹¹ By then, there emerged a style of monograph writing about Chinese villagers by native anthropologists in the manner approved by functionalists. Kaixiangong, the village studied by Fei, was described in terms of the cycle of work or economic activities, domestic life and the kinship system, and ceremonial life or the cycle of rituals. The unit of economic activity on the peasant farm was the peasant household, and most of the important ceremonies were connected with either the cycle of economic activities or the domestic cycle of birth, marriage and death (Fei, 1939).¹²

¹¹. This work was completed under the supervision of Malinowski at the London School of Economics under the University of London. At the time, Malinowski had successfully established the framework of analysis which included two features: first was to show the social and cultural activities of the peasants in their manifold inter-relatedness; the second was to concentrate on the day-to-day life of people rather than the colorful and the spectacular (Liu, 1995).

¹². To Fei, anthropologists turn to villages not just because village life is important to understand China, but also because of the very assumption that a village is small enough for an adequate observation of its social relationships. It is a closed community in which functions of each part of the community can be observed in relation to the whole. Also, it is manageable to observe for a fieldworker who plans to stay only for a limited length of period (Fei 1939:7).

After Fei, the other native scholars basically adopted a similar approach to study Chinese villages. A second full-length study of Taitou in Shangdong province of China was published shortly afterwards by Martin Yang (M. Yang, 1948). There were other projects taken by other scholars such as James Yen, Liang Shu-ming, Lin Yue-hua, C.K. Yang and so on. These kind of studies had to be discontinued before the Communists came to power. There were few studies on Chinese peasant communities after 1949. C.K. Yang's study of Nanching, a village on the fringe of Guangzhou, gave some idea of a peasant community during the transition from the old to the new social order. This study once again emphasized the distribution of land and the organization of production, and discusses the transformation during the stage of land reforms (C. K. Yang, 1959).

The early Chinese anthropologists basically followed the suit of their foreign counterparts. They stressed the importance of objective investigation and power of observation, namely the functionalist or the structural-functionalist approach. In the end, their researches were intrinsically synchronic and static. Their theoretical approach greatly influenced their view of Chinese peasant society. If we put these early Chinese village studies in their historical context, we can find that these studies are done for the sake of rural reconstruction (*xiangtu chongjian*) and modernization projects of China. Fei, Yen and Liang were all active organizers of *xiangtu chongjian*. Although they had somewhat more positive view of the cultural circumstances of China's rural inhabitants and the customs and beliefs they investigated have considerable importance for the rural China, they still thought the rural China they described was backward, and the problem of China was rooted in the poverty, unemployment and exploitation of the peasantry. To solve the problem of Chinese society, the change and modernization of rural China became necessary. But soon after "liberation", the discipline of anthropology and sociology were totally eliminated from the universities. Both the local or foreign scholars were banned from doing research in China.

In recent years, soon before and after opening the door to outside world, an increasing number of scholars joined the study of peasant society and reconstructed the rural history in Mao's rural China. Pioneered by Parish and Whyte, they used Hong Kong as a base to interview refugees from China to study rural China under communist rule and wrote a thick volume called *Village and Family in Contemporary*

China. The village life of China was constructed via interview records of 65 emigrants in Hong Kong from 63 different villages located in 30 counties in Guangdong and one southern county of neighboring Fujian (Parish & Whyte, 1978). This problematic methodology has been copied by the other sinologists.¹³ Anita Chan etc. also adopted the same methodology to reconstruct the history of a South China village entitled *Chen Village*, from Mao's era to the reform era. The political strugglings between the village cadres in different campaigns was well described (Chan, Madsen & Unger, 1992). The works of Jean Oi, Vivienne Shue and David Zweig also contributed to our knowledge of the power relationship between rural cadres and peasants, and the local politics of how the local cadres deflected the central policy for protecting local interest (Oi, 1989; Shue, 1988; Zweig, 1984, 1989). Employing somewhat different methodology, anthropologists like Helen Siu, Potter and Potter have done the fieldwork in South China in reform era. Their works combine a historical depth with a solid grounding in ethnography, and deal with many different aspects of village life, which help us understand recent rural change in China (Siu, 1989; Potter and Potter, 1990).

However, the above studies seem to pay little or no attention to cultural domination in the socialist state. Myron L. Cohen is one of the few to look closely at how the "powerless peasantry" was invented and constructed by the Chinese Communist in a different way for legitimating the Communist Revolution and the new regime. As Myron L. Cohen said: "In order to create such a new society, and to supply the justification for its creation, it also required that the 'old' society be defined in such a way as to provide the basis for its thorough rejection" (Cohen, 1993:151). Whether in Mao's era or Deng's era, the Chinese Communist government faced the burden of cultural construction, for which there must be both a totally objectionable 'old regime' and a new liberated society. The cultural construction of "old" and "new" regime is basically the question of hegemony in Gramsci's sense, of power/knowledge in Foucault's skeptic mind, and of cultural politics in anthropological circles.

Following the academic fashion of emphasizing the power of subordinate groups, in his book *Peasant Power in China* (1991), Kelliher begins to bring the

¹³ The whole critique of South China studies see Y. L. Chiu and H. B. Ku 1998, "Affirming Anthropological Research and Teaching in Asia and South China -- some historico-ethnographic recaps and, perhaps, a reminder" in *The Future of Anthropology*, Department of Anthropology, CUHK.

peasant back in to the political studies and re-emphasizes peasant power. His broader theoretical purpose is to contribute to the debate on the question of the "power of the weak". Unlike earlier works on Chinese peasantry by other scholars such as Burns, Oi, and Zweig, which showed how Chinese peasants and cadres deflected central policy, Kelliher asserts that even under a very powerful socialist state, peasants still have power to make state policy. According to Kelliher, the real force behind "decollectivization", or what he calls "privatization", was the Chinese peasantry. In the collective, peasants not only undermined the communes, but also forced state leaders to accede to the decollectivization of farm land in China. Like James Scott, Kelliher does not believe that peasant power is exerted through an organized conspiracy or some unified conscious strategy. He argues that atomized peasants living under the common economic and political conditions can respond to incentives and opportunities in the same manner. Although peasant power is narrow as it lacks any coercive force; still within these limits, peasant power is nonetheless real and effective. To him, peasant power can also include the power to make the state consider and finally elect policy choices that are of the peasants' own creation (Kelliher, 1992).

Kate-xiao Zhou, in her book *How the Farmers Changed China: Power of the People*, shares the view that peasants in China are not passive and powerless to change their livelihood and intervene into the very history; on the contrary, they are powerful to change China. Like Kelliher, she argues that the reform of China was created and led by the Chinese peasants. As she says, "without farmers' initiative in *baochan daohu* and without the *baochan daohu* demonstration effect, WanLi and Beijing intellectuals would not have discovered *baochan daohu*" (Zhou, 1996:8). She takes Scott's position that the peasants' spontaneous, unorganized, leaderless, non-ideological, apolitical movements are significant and have far-reaching social, political and economic effects (1996: 12).

Although these two scholars of China studies try to construct a different view of rural China from the perspective of the subordinate classes, their macro approach cannot help us to understand the power/knowledge process in everyday practices. To them, power is still something that someone can possess. They also have an inclination to generalize Chinese peasants as a whole, and seem to overstate and over-generalize the role of the peasants in the development process and to ignore the new

mechanisms, invented in reform era, which the state adopts to control rural society. Their portrayal of the peasant is also too uni-dimensional and ignores the disjuncture and fragmentation among the peasantry. By following the cultural version of power and resistance, we know that power has, as Foucault and de Certeaus stated, no possessor, no privileged place, no superiors or inferiors. Chinese peasants in their everyday life practices are reproducing and creating their own meaning of life-world. Although the Chinese government can impose national policy/ development programs on the rural society, the local people also can make these policies and programs imposed on them something quite different from what the policy maker had in mind in order to adapt it to their own interests and their own ways of life. So we have to recognize that individuals and social groups are "knowledgeable", and "capable" in that they devise ways of solving problematic situations and actively engage in constructing their own social world.

After the political and economic reforms of rural China, there are many variations between different villages. The development strategies of the Chinese government in the post-Mao period caused the great differentiation of rural population between the coastal and internal area, north and south China. It is difficult to understand rural China and peasants in totality and uniformity. Even within the same region or province, there is great diversity within the rural population. The abandonment of the commune, the recurrence of family farming, rural industrialization, the commercialization of rural economy and other development programs make the subject-position of peasants ambiguous. They can be rural producer, worker, merchant, businessman and so on. So now it has become increasingly difficult to identify peasants in post-Mao China with a coherent system of subject positions. So in my study, I do not intend to generalize the Chinese village and peasants as my study. Rather, I will investigate how a multiplicity of social actors established their sphere of autonomy in a fragmented social and political space under rural transformation. Through studying the everyday discourse, I will emphasize analyzing the ongoing processes of negotiation, adaptation, struggling and transferring of meaning that take place among the specific actors concerned in rural development in post-reform China.

1.5. *Guanxi & Zeren -- Exploring Indigenous Concepts*

Based on the ethnographic studies, in recent years, some China anthropologists or sinologists have devoted themselves to constructing indigenous concepts. I think the work of exploring the indigenous concept is significant because through this we can understand the different philosophy and practice of the indigenous people. To make sense of the peasant resistance in the post reform era, exploring the indigenous concept via their everyday discourse becomes necessary. I hope this effort can make some contribution to the Chinese anthropology.

The Chinese concept "*guanxi*" has been recognized by many scholars as a key social-cultural concept to understand social relationships in Chinese society (e.g. Jacobs, 1979; King, 1991; Fei, 1992; Yang, 1994; Yan, 1996; Kipnis, 1997). *Guanxi* can be literally translated into English as "relation", "relationship", "personal connections", "social networks", or "particularistic ties". But none of these translations can fully grasp the rich meaning of *guanxi*. As Butterfield states, in Chinese society, people get used to dividing people into those with whom they already have *guanxi* (a fixed relationship and a connection), and those they do not. These connections operate like a series of invisible threads which tie Chinese to each other with great tensile strength (Butterfield, 1983:74-75). Shu-ming Liang also suggests that Chinese society is neither individual-based nor group-based, but *guanxi* (relation)-based, in which individuals engage in social exchange with each other (Liang 1963:94). Fei similarly concludes that Chinese society structurally is composed of numerous personal networks defined by dyadic social ties and without explicit boundaries. However, the content of these exchange behaviors in such a network-based society is contextually determined, and people's motivations for engaging in *guanxi* are differentiated. So the concept of *guanxi* is difficult to define clearly, even to a native Chinese. I agree with Kipnis that there is no unchanging, single form of *guanxi*. The person in the village can have urban *guanxi*, business *guanxi*, kinship *guanxi*, female/male *guanxi*, husband/wife *guanxi*, class *guanxi*, marriage *guanxi*, comrade *guanxi*, classmate *guanxi*, owner/tenant *guanxi*, parent/children *guanxi* and more. Some of these *guanxi* are pre-ordained and some are cultivated. Each of these relationships carries its own connotations and its own social and historical specificity (Kipnis, 1997:184). For analytical purpose, broadly based on their motivation, I classify *guanxi* into two types -- instrumental *guanxi* and

moral *guanxi*. Of course, no classification is adequate enough. Sometimes *guanxi* for instrumental purposes and *guanxi* in moral sense are difficult to separate clearly.

Instrumental *Guanxi*

Several studies reveal that the particularism and instrumentalism dominate people's *guanxi* in Chinese society. Jacobs defines *guanxi* as "particularistic ties" through which the Taiwanese make political allies and secure votes (Jacobs, 1979). Walder views *guanxi* as an informal aspect of the institutional culture in socialist factories. The granting and receiving of favors of various kinds is the motivating force behind personal ties, which help workers obtain desirable resources that otherwise would be inaccessible (Walder, 1986). Oi takes a similar position to Walder in pointing out that in rural China the peasants exchange their political loyalty for obtaining income opportunities, special distribution, and so forth. She conceptualizes this social behavior in rural China as socialist clientelism by adopting the patron-client model of anthropology (Oi, 1989).

Gift-giving (*songli*) as well as favors and banquets-giving (*qingke*) are the popular practices in the formation, maintenance, modification and reproduction of *guanxi*. In instrumental *guanxi*, the motivation of gift giving and other practices are for pursuing personal interest beyond the formal structure or official channels. (Walder, 1986; Yan, 1996; Yang, 1995). When people instrumentally send a gift to someone, they require, expect or hint for the recipients to return something in *jiaohuan* (exchange). "Something" here may imply many different kinds of things, e.g. obtaining and changing job assignments, buying certain foods and consumer items, getting into good hospitals, buying train tickets, obtaining housing, doing business and so on, which are part of the expectation of the gift givers. Putting gift-giving in the socialist Chinese context, we can better understand why there is an instrumental inclination of *guanxi* building in today's Chinese society and what the instrumental *guanxi* looks like.

In socialist China, after collectivization, participation in collective labor became the only means of obtaining grain outside the black market where prices were high and supply was uncertain. At the same time, in collective agriculture, all peasants in China also enjoyed a certain security level or subsistence guarantee. Each

peasant was to receive a monthly minimum amount of grain as a basic ration (*jiben kouliang*), independent of work points. Because individuals lacked availability of alternative sources for the satisfaction of their needs, they became the clients of the organization to which they belonged (Oi, 1985 & 1989). In urban China, after the integrating of private and public enterprises (*gongsi heyings*), the work units (*danwei*) became the focal points for delivery of public goods, services, and other materials and social advantages that were not readily available from other sources. So the individuals depended on their work unit for satisfaction of their needs.¹⁴ It ensured the political loyalty of individuals to the working unit and leaders. In exchange for loyalty, the workers were rewarded systematically with income opportunities, special distribution, and so forth that the officials of government were able to dispense (Walder, 1986; Lu, 1989).

In Mao's period, consumer goods and materials were scarce, so the people had to resort to *guanxi* to acquire things not readily available in state stores and markets. Apart from political loyalty, gift giving was an important way for the workers or the peasants to obtain their personal interest because the cadres or officials derived authority from their ability to influence the everyday work distribution, opportunities for employment, and the allocation of welfare and relief. The political and economic structure of socialist China forced people to cultivate the instrumental personal *guanxi* connection with their leaders to fulfill their needs, and to maintain good relationships (*gaohao guanxi*) with their leaders for pursuing their interests via gifts.

In the reform era, *guanxi* building and gift-giving are still popular practices in China. Although the introduction of the market mechanism gradually eroded the redistributive power of state and its gatekeeper as most of resources could be obtained in the market, as Oi and Nee's observed, in this transitional period, market forces are still constrained and dominated by continued bureaucratic micro-intervention. On the one hand, the local cadres keep their position in state bureaucracy; on the other hand, they participate in private business. Thus the partial reform in China gives rise to a hybrid elite of cadre-entrepreneurs who are structurally located in networks, which allow them to maximize benefits from both the public and private sectors of the

¹⁴. In this sense, the authority of socialist state was derived from its monopolistic control of allocating opportunities, goods and resources.

socialist mixed economy. They are able to distort the allocative mechanism of the market by involving the personal connection network (*guanxi wang*) within the state organizations. They are likely to experience lower transaction costs on trade across the boundaries of the redistributive and private economies, which may provide them with more ready access to scarce resources and marketing outlets. Hence, peasants and entrepreneurs often have to seek to establish *guanxi* with the local cadres.¹⁵ Because of this, the instrumental patron-client bond is still maintained after the rural reform (Oi, 1990 & 1992; Nee, 1991 & 1992). The desire of making money (*zhuanqian*) and becoming wealthy (*zhifu*) further encourages the people to cultivate *guanxi* with the cadres and official with whom they have no pre-established relations, or where a pre-established relation is remote. In Chinese terms, "walking through the back door" (*zouhoumen*) is widely known to be the most effective and necessary way to get things done through personal network. Manipulation of instrumental *guanxi* also causes serious corruption in both mainland China and Taiwan (Jacobs, 1979; Yang, 1994).

Moral Guanxi

People's motivations for cultivating *guanxi* are not necessarily for material interest or instrumental gains. They engage in *guanxi* or sending gifts to others for the sake of performing *li*, which means rituals, properties, and ceremonial expressions of ethical ideals, according to the Weberian interpretation (Weber, 1968:156-157). Gifts (*liwu*) and other material things like banquets are the means for people to perform their *li* in order to maintain the friendship, kinship, sentiment (*renqing*) and so on, rather than as the means of pursuing political and economic interests. When people practice moral *guanxi*, they will emphasize the cultural meaning codes rather than material aspects of the gifts. Importantly, the people engaging in moral *guanxi* more or less have fixed and pre-ordained relationships. The gift exchanges between the people in moral *guanxi* often reflect a long-term relationship between a giver and a recipient.

¹⁵ For instance, in some rural areas, local government still plays the role of owner of a corporation after decollectivization of agriculture because it owns public property such as enterprise, various pieces of equipment as well as forest land, orchards, fish ponds and so on. So it has the right to offer certain individuals permission to operate the corporation's property or business (Oi, 1992).

The word *guanxi* is a relatively modern expression of human relationship in Chinese society. According to Fei, there is a cultural root underlying the practice of moral *guanxi*. In Confucian philosophy, *lun* is a word used to describe the designated proper human relationship; it means the differentiated order among individuals (Fei, 1992; King, 1991). According to Confucians, there are many kinds of relations between individuals, of which the well-known five cardinal relations are fundamental. *Qing* (affection) is about the relationship between parent and child; *yi* (righteousness) is between ruler and subject; *bie* (distinction) is between husband and wife; *xu* (order) is between older brothers and younger brothers; and *xin* (sincerity) is between friends. Among relationships, some of them are preordained givens, while others are voluntarily constructed. In a preordained relationship, for example, the father-son *guanxi* is more or less prescribed by fixed status as well as fixed responsibilities. In fact, for either the preordained or constructed *guanxi*, an individual still has considerable freedom in deciding whether to enter into the relationship with others. But people violating the relationship or not maintaining the *lun* or *guanxi* properly will be condemned as *bu xiao* (not filial) in parent-child relationship; and as *bu zhong* and *bu yi* (not loyal and righteous) in ruler-subject and friends relationships. Those failing to present gifts properly in the expected ritual situations will be criticized as *que li* (act without proprieties) or *bu dong li* (not understand proprieties) (King, 1991; Fei, 1992; Yan, 1996). So in Chinese society, people sometimes present gifts at different situations, e.g. birthdays, important festivals, ceremonies and funerals, mainly for maintaining the order of relationships. The connotation of this kind of relationship is full of moral responsibility, personal sentiment and human affection. *Youqing youyi* (having human sentiment and having righteousness) is highly appreciated by a moral person or a good man in Chinese society.

In theory, we can easily construct the dichotomy between instrumental *guanxi* and moral *guanxi*. In practice, it is difficult to separate them clearly. The motivation of cultivating is also not necessarily purely instrumental or moral all the time; rather, the elements sometimes coexist in different contexts.

***Zeren* in *Guanxi* as a Principle of Social Contract**

Guanxi as a principle of social relationship constrains and determinates forms of social interaction among Chinese, in which there is a expectation of mutual obligation. Local Chinese term this mutual expectation as "*zeren*". *Zeren* can be translated as "obligation" and "duty", or "responsibility" in English. When people say someone has *zeren* to somebody or to do something for somebody, it implies that person must act based on the social, legal, or moral ties, e.g. contract or promise. *Zeren* can be defined in law or regulation. In the so-called "modern" society, different aspects of *zeren* have been legally defined in terms of citizenship by the state, e.g. taxation, military service, and so on. But *zeren* is not necessarily defined by law, it can also be defined in morality, sentiment, and so on. For instance, our *zeren* to our family or to our friends is seldom defined by law, but by social norms.

Zeren implies *guanxi* (personal or social relationship) and vice versa. When people say they have some kind of *zeren* to someone, we know they have *guanxi* with that person. If people have the *guanxi* with someone, this also implies they have to fulfill *zeren* for that person. So the production of *guanxi* simultaneously creates human feeling (*ganqing*) and obligation (*zeren*). For either moral or instrumental *guanxi*, there is a principle of reciprocity or mutual exchange underlying people's relationship. People engaging in *guanxi* would expect a response and return from others in the *guanxi* network (Yang, 1957). The return or response can be both material and affectionate. Anyone failing to respond or give a return properly would hurt the *guanxi*, even breaking down the *guanxi* ties. Many scholars have made efforts to understand the association between *guanxi* and other indigenous notions such as *renqing* or *ganqing* (human feeling), *mianzi* (face) and *bao* (indebtedness). These three words refer to three different levels of people's feeling towards their relation with others (King, 1991; Yan, 1995; Yang, 1994; Kipnis, 1997). They are treated as three important factors driving people to maintain the link of *guanxi*. Staying in Ku Village, I sense *zeren* is another important factor binding people's *guanxi*. *Zeren* in *guanxi* is a norm of reciprocity which defines people's obligation to others. For instance, in father-son *guanxi*, both father and sons have some kinds of defined *zeren* to fulfill. The definition of *zeren* rooted in the local culture which is shared by the members of the community. *Chuanzhong jiedai* (reproduction of family line), as a kind of social norms, is sons' *zeren* for repaying their parents' *yangyu zhi en*

(kindness of rearing); *baiji* (offering sacrifice) is also the villagers' obligation of returning to gods who protect and bless their production.

Most of anthropological studies have told us that there is a similar practices in other societies. They articulated a principle of social contract or reciprocity underlying the practices of gift exchange and other economic activities in "primitive society" (Mauss, 1967; Malinowski, 1926; Firth, 1959; Sahlins, 1978). Malinowski argues that in Melanesian society, the binding force of economic obligations lies in the sanction either side may invoke to sever the bonds of reciprocity. One gives because of the expectation of return and one returns because of the threat that one's partner may stop giving. All rights and obligations are "arranged into well-balanced chains of reciprocal services" (1926:46). Firth and other anthropologists also draw similar conclusion. Many ethnographic accounts also deal with the reciprocal relationship between the patron and client in non-western societies (Scott, 1972; Eisenstadt & Roniger, 1980). According to Scott, the patron-client relationship can be defined as dyadic (two-person) ties involving a friendship in which an individual of higher socio-economic status (patron) uses his own influence and resources to provide protection and/or benefits for a person of lower status (client) who, for his part, reciprocates by offering general support and assistance, including personal services, to the patron (Scott, 1972:8). Although there is a basis of social inequality in patron-client dyad, people involved into this relationship are bound by the moral principle of reciprocity.

Most of the above studies about *guanxi* emphasize the level of *guanxi* between person to person. However, in Ku Village, I find the villagers often have extended and applied the principle of *zeren* to define *guanxi* between villagers and ancestors, villagers and gods, villagers and nature, and villagers and state. The main focus of my thesis is the study of *guanxi* between the state and villagers. Unlike person-to-person relationships, in the contractual relationship between villagers and the government, reciprocity or mutual responsibilities are based not so much on *renqing* or *ganqing*, as on the notion of *zeren* or mutual obligation, responsibilities and duties, especially in the reform era. As Li and O'Brien state,

Since the introduction of the household responsibility system, more and more villagers appear to conceive of their relationship with the state in contractual terms. Under the current grain purchase policy, for instance, farmers commonly enter into contracts with township

governments that oblige them to sell grain to the state but that also oblige the township governments to supply production materials (Li & O'Brien, 1996: 40-41).

People in Ku Village hold a similar view in perceiving their *guanxi* with the government in terms of "*zeren*". They often state that they are willing to fulfill their *zeren* only if the government does so, too, or provides additional benefits in return. But I would like to remark that the definition or connotation of *zeren* is not fixed. It is never a static and unchangeable external norm/value or institution/system, constraining people's behaviors and actions. Rather, it is defined and re-defined by the villagers in everyday life practice. By saying *zeren* is thus defined, I also want to emphasize that its content and definition is situationally dependent upon the interests of human actors -- villagers.¹⁶ In the post-reform era, for example, when villagers sensed their entitlement to social services and welfare is being evaporated, they questioned the government's *zeren* in their daily conversation. When the villagers resisted additional taxes and fee collections, they also invoked a reciprocal logic to justify their actions. The logic of their argument is that they may accept extraordinary exaction only if the government has fulfilled their *zeren* or provided additional benefits in exchange.

Defining *zeren* involves *quanli guanxi* (power relationship), in studying *zeren*, it is necessary to ask: who has power to define whose *zeren*, in terms of law, in terms of morality, in terms of economy and so on? And how is *zeren* defined? To understand the concept of *zeren*, I will endeavour to contextualize the discourse of *zeren* in the political and economic transformations in the reform era. It will be fully discussed in Chapter 5.

Defining *Zeren* as a Subversive Practice

According to Foucault, power cannot be exercised without establishing the regime of truth through creating a rejectable other (1980). To the CCP government,

¹⁶ . Though this study is indebted to the insight from those who have interpreted Confucian ideas of human relationship and those who have analyzed *guanxi* in socialist China, I am not satisfied to view Confucian "culture" or "tradition" as a sort of abstract "social structure" that works outside of or above the human subjects, and which structures people's *guanxi*. Instead *guanxi* is the result of purposeful efforts of the human actors through defining and re-defining their *zeren* to each other at specific historical moments.

the rejectable others is the old regime and the old society (*jiu shehui*). Since the great upheaval of the revolution in 1949, the CCP government has made a gigantic effort to reject the dominant culture in old society. *Guanxi* practices, which are rooted in conventional kinship and friendship, were also criticized as an obstacle to Chinese modernity. Throughout the official discourse from 1949, *renqing guanxi* was narrated as a negative social phenomenon against proper socialist ethics. Socialist ethics were defined by Mao as "*dagong wusi*" (selflessness) and "*wei renmin fuwu*" (serving the people). In Mao's famous article *In Memory of Norman Bethune*, he summed up the essence of his moral teaching as follows:

We must all learn the spirit of absolute selflessness... A man's ability may be great or small, but if he has this spirit, he is already noble-minded and pure, a man of moral integrity and above vulgar interests, a man who is of value to the people (Mao, 1961-65: 337).

The CCP government made a tremendous effort to create a morally upright "new man" and transform the social relationship in "new China". In Mao's view, the new man embodied the socialist ethic of altruism and self-sacrifice. People were required to work hard and show helpfulness for its own sake. They are discouraged from thinking of how they could get ahead and acquire things for their own interests. A universalistic ethic of "comradeship" came to displace the personalist ethics of friendship and kinship. "Comradeship" declared that a person should treat all social relationships equally. Any private ethic had to be rejected (Vogel, 1965; Gold, 1985; Yan, 1996). At different stages, in the countryside or city, the CCP government put systematic efforts to destroy *renqing guanxi* and traditional kinship bonds among the people via different political campaign like land reform, rectification campaigns (*sanfan wufan*), Smash the Four Olds (*po sijiu*), Cultural Revolution and so forth (Madsen, 1984; Vogel, 1965).

The CCP government's enthusiasm for eliminating of traditional practices was based on the linear Marxist historicity which presumes that there is a historical trajectory from feudalism, to capitalism to socialism. As Kipnis states, "since the CCP's mission was to lead China to the future heaven of Communism, any theorization that linked peasants to feudalism or capitalism implied they were backward-looking and bad, while those that linked them to socialism or communism implied the opposite" (1997:167). In the official discourse, the terms "feudal" and "capitalist" were used to denounce practices of *renqing*. In rural villages, the practices

of *guanxi* like gift exchange, ritual and filiality and desire for many children and so on were described as feudal remnants (*fengjian canyu*); in cities, practices of *guanxi* like consumer goods, going through the backdoor (*zou houmen*), banqueting and so on were called capitalist or bourgeois individualism (*zichan jieji geren zhuyi*). The ideology of the CCP has remained fairly consistent. In Deng's era, the criticism of *guanxi* practices has prevailed in official discourse, especially since the mid-1980s. A typical sample of the official perception of *guanxi* practice was cited in Yang's book. It states:

The so-called *guanxi* network is the main manifestation of the deviant winds blowing within the Party and in society today. It is the remnant of traditional China's feudal and clan systems' way of thinking. It is also a product of the intermingling of [feudal thought] with radical bourgeois individualism and selfishness, which has occurred in the process of the reforms for "enlivening the domestic economy and opening up to the outside world." "Guanxi network" is found where, for narrow individual and small group interest, [people] connect together in mutual dependence and mutual utilization. (Yu 1987: 103 cited in Yang, 1994:58).

Guanxi practice was condemned as "deviant winds" (*buzheng zhi feng*) which means immoral or incorrect behavior. It was seen as the "backward" (*luohou*) and "feudal" (*fengjian*), "feudal remnants" (*fengjian canyu*) or "feudal poison" (*fengjian liudu*), counter to "modern" socialist ethics. In the above narration, *guanxi* practice is also said to stem from the persistence of a backward ethical system whose particularistic ethics of interpersonal relations prevent the development of universalistic loyalty to the country and the "socialist system". There were several campaigns in the 1980s like "Construction of Socialist Civilization" (*shehui zhuyi wenming jianshi*), and "Anti-Capitalist Liberalization" (*fan ziben zhuyi zhiyouhua*), which aimed to cleanse the poison and remnants of capitalism and feudalism. In order to reconstruct the *guanxi* between the state and masses, rejecting the traditional ideology became necessary. In the reform era, Deng's government devoted itself to redefining the state-masses relationship in the new language of modernity and citizenship. In official discourse, submission to state policies, e.g. birth control and taxation, is often defined as part of national citizens' *zeren* in the new century. I will discuss this in more detail in Chapter 6 and 7.

It is quite interesting to think why the "poison" or the "remnants" could not be cleansed by the CCP government throughout nearly half a century, and the villagers'

"backwardness" stubbornly persisted throughout Mao's era, and revived in the reform era. My case provides the evidence that socialist ethics never obtained the consent of the villagers, and never totally replaced villagers' conception of *renqing guanxi*, and *zeren*. The underlying moral codes of reciprocity and mutual obligation are still strongly rooted in their mind.

Putting *guanxi* practice in the context of the socialist economic system, Oi and Walder, adopting a functionalist view, perceive *guanxi* (personal networks) as an integrated feature of the socialist state's capacity to rule; the patron-client system is created by the communist system as well. Through the patron-clients relation or *guanxi* network, the group of non-elite are able to affect the policy implementation process and to further their particular interests, deflecting direct and formalized state control (Oi, 1989; Walder, 1986).¹⁷ Similarly, Yang argues that gift economy in terms of *guanxi* network emerged to defuse and subvert the power of the state redistributive economy. She suggests that the construction of subjectivity in the "art of social relationships" not only helps dismantle the state-centered subject, but may also form the basic texture and fabric of a "civil society" beginning to untangle itself from the state. The art of *guanxi* in this sense constitutes an informal power in opposition to the power of the socialist state (Yang, 1994). However, I think it is mistaken to romanticize all *guanxi* practice because gift economy and other instrumental *guanxi* practices, like walking through the back door, to large extent empower the gatekeepers (e.g. officials and cadres) who occupy the key positions in the state organizations, rather than the ordinary people. Of course, cultivating *guanxi* through gift giving and other practices seems to provide alternative means for some groups of people to seek their own interest within the socialist system. But it seems to me only to strengthen the power structure and power relation in the socialist state, as well as to threatens the interests of people who have no *guanxi* network.

Borrowing Foucault's version of power/knowledge, I would like to argue that people in Ku Village subverted the power of the state not through gift-giving and engaging in instrumental *guanxi*, but through the discursive practice of moral *guanxi*, e.g. defining and redefining *zeren* between the state and the peasants based on their

¹⁷ For example, in Oi's book, she explains the deviant behaviour of local cadres keeping grain from the state is not simply a case of personal greed but a desire of peasants to consume more grain. She argues that it is a form of peasant participation and strategy for survival.

own conception of reciprocity. To the villagers, *zeren* is never an unconditional obligation. They grant rights to the government to collect grain tax and other fees only when the government and cadres fulfill their *zeren* first. They clearly articulate their entitlement to social security and welfare as part of a social contract between the government and the villagers. A government that failed to fulfil its *zeren* for providing these benefits would be constructed as "bad government", and vice versa. Similarly, cadres who failed to carry out their *zeren* to serve the village and act as the protective cadre would be termed as "bad cadres". Their own constructed model of "good government" and "good cadres" become frame of reference to judge the government and village cadres. The defining of *zeren* is a complex process in which villagers selectively articulate different kinds of comparative knowledge from different sources, e.g. television programs, Party propaganda, and newspaper, to serve their own purpose.

Villagers preach their idea of moral *zeren* and *zeren* of the government and local cadres in everyday discourse and attempt to get others to accept their particular frame of meaning and point of view, in order to justify their active resistance to state policies, e.g. taxation and birth control. They seem to view taxes, fees, and other exaction in terms of exchanges that imply mutual *zeren*. They see their *guanxi* with government and cadres partly in terms of enforceable contracts and fulfill their *zeren* so long as government and cadres treat them as equals. I agree with Feierman that "when people select a particular form of discourse, when they shape a political argument in a particular way, this is by no means a passive act" (1990:3). In Ku Village, I often heard the villagers criticize the instrumental *guanxi* between some villagers and local cadres. They reproached those villagers who sought to cultivate *guanxi* for self interests; they rebuked the village cadres who violate the village interests by appointing the village head according to their personal preference; they blame those village cadres who abandon their *zeren* as village leaders; they also question the government who violate the state-peasant *guanxi* by abandoning their *zeren*. This is not to say that the villagers, who criticized other's immorality, do not cultivate or engage in instrumental *guanxi*. But I am curious to know the following in the coming chapters: how did the villagers come to imagine themselves as "moral peasants" and to define a "peasant" moral outlook; why did they form their discourse

of *zeren* and *guanxi* like that; what's the significance of this discourse in their resistance to the state's policies?

1.6. Overview of the Thesis

This thesis is based upon fieldwork carried out between the autumn of 1993 and June of 1996. For the first two months (between autumn of 1993 to spring of 1994) of this period, I conducted my research for the fulfillment of my M.Phil. thesis. After this period of data collection, I had got a contour of the village and got to know some of the villagers.

I returned to the village in July of 1995 for the fulfillment of my Ph.D. thesis. During most of the 12 months of my field, I stayed in the same village. From July to August, I visited the editorial office of local history of the Guangdong Provincial Government. In their office, I found some information about the local history of Mei County. I tried to interview the officials of the Guangdong Provincial Government. But the official of the editorial office suggested I interview the officials at the county level because they should understand the local situation better. In September, I went to Mei County and contacted some officials of the county government. Several interviews were arranged by my relatives in order to listen to the official voices about the local development and their opinion on several policy issues such as taxation, birth control and so on. I also often visited the library at Mei County, in which I reviewed about ten years of the local newspaper for the sake of acquiring the necessary background documentation on the topic and getting a rough picture of the development of Mei County in these ten years. The rest of the time I stayed in the village. Sometimes I visited other villages for comparison. The everyday interaction with the villagers enriched my understanding of their world view, their feeling and perception on different kinds of issues. Everyday I recorded my dialogue with the villagers and the important events that happened in the village. I also participated into their activities and festivals. In the village, I was not only the observer, but also a participant who was observed by the villagers.

This thesis has been divided into nine chapters including the introduction and conclusion. In Chapter 2, I would like to invite the readers to Ku Village where I stayed and studied. I will present the social-economic setting and the legacy of Ku

Village which formulated the special social and historical context of my study. In addition, I will describe how the conception of *guanxi* and *zeren* is produced and reproduced in important ceremonies and everyday life occasions.

In Chapter 3, as the title states, I will try understand the history of Mao's China from the Ku villagers. Staying in the village, I find that talking about Mao's era is the main content of their everyday narration. Putting their discourse of Mao's China into context, I find that past experience or history is very significant in their resistance nowadays. There is a contradiction in their discourse about the past. They criticize the CCP government by recollecting the past painful experience under Mao. But sometimes they praise Mao's China as a way to negate the government in the reform era. In short, they always construct and reconstruct their own history always for their own interests.

Chapter 4 talks about the economic transformation of Ku Village. In the first part, I will look at how the CCP government diffused the knowledge of the market economy and capitalist ideology into the village and how 'making money' became the fashion in Ku Village. In the second part, I will look closely at how the villagers reformulated the state constructed economic development model and created their own which in some aspects clashes with the interests of the state. From the view of the villagers, I try to understand the economic logic of the villagers, e.g. their view of land, labor, profit, etc.

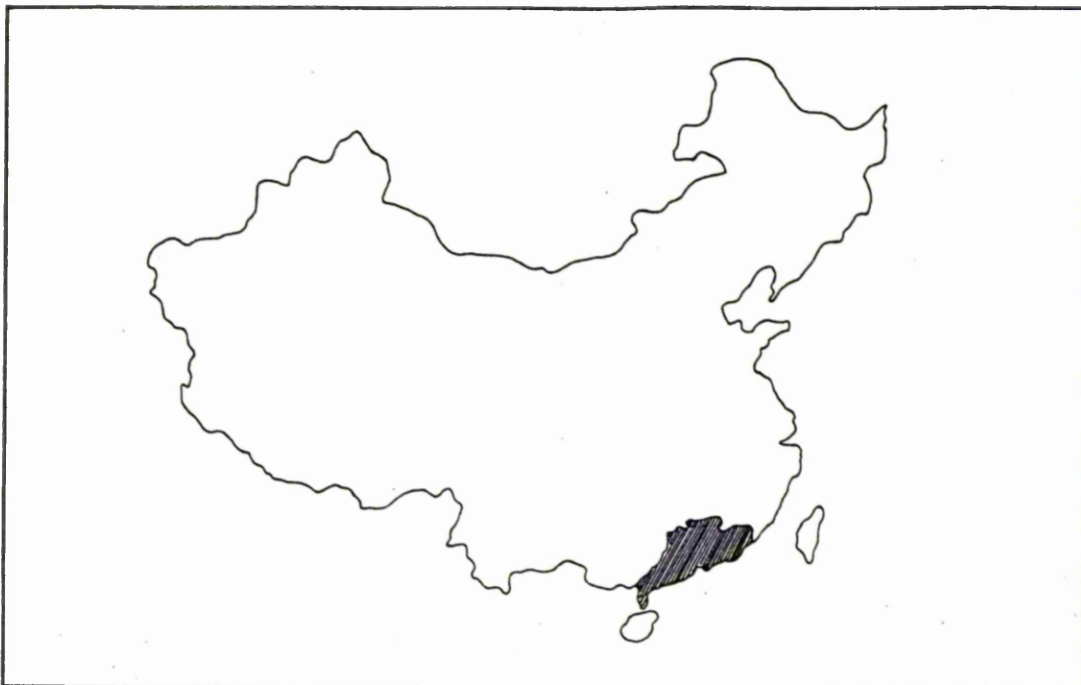
In Chapter 5, from the everyday narrative of the villagers, I will see how the villagers construct their model of "good government"/ "bad government" and "good cadres"/ "bad cadres", through defining *zeren* of the government and local cadres. In this chapter, I will pay much attention to how the villagers articulate the information for constructing their model through different sources such as mass media, overseas relatives and so on.

In Chapter 6, I will focus on the specific issue of peasant resistance to taxation. I will decipher how the villagers and their households organize themselves individually and collectively with a variety of tactics to resist the tax collection of the state. I will pay much attention to how the villagers formulate the rationale for their action discursively in terms of 'reasonable tax' and 'unreasonable tax'.

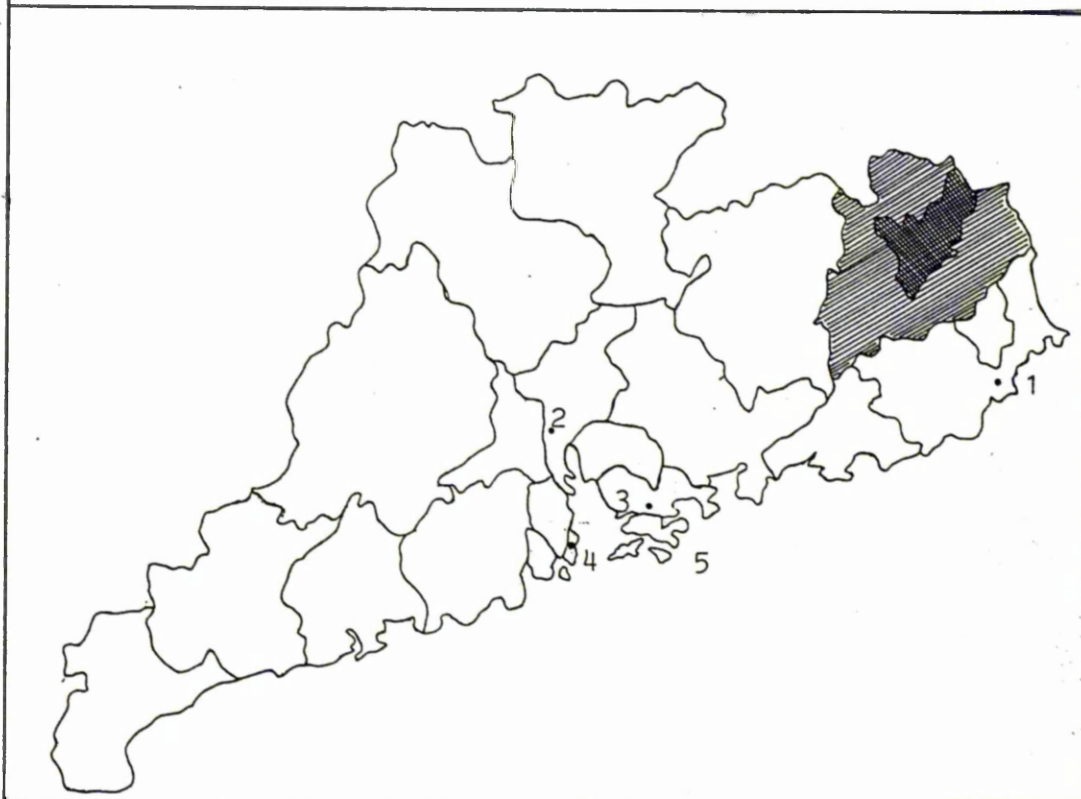
Chapter 7 talks about the controversial issues regarding population policy in China. Apart from examining the peasants' resistance in action, I will also examine the cultural meaning of having a son in rural China and its relationship to their family and kinship, economic structure of rural society and local religion. The different strategies the villagers employed to maintain their family line will also be carefully examined.

In the first part of Chapter 8, I will closely examine the village election and try to understand why the election made the villagers turn to new tactics -- sidelining government -- to protect their own interests. In the second part, I will go beyond the household or individual resistance, I will look at how the Ku identity is formulated in the reconstruction of the ancestral hall and other village temples. The revival of traditional organization also implies the struggle between the state and the peasants. The villagers in the process are able to articulate different resources, e.g. overseas Chinese networks, to support their movement for their own interests.

Chapter 9 will conclude the whole project. In the Appendix 1, I will rethink the problem of representation and my subjective position as a sub-indigenous anthropologist.



Map 1



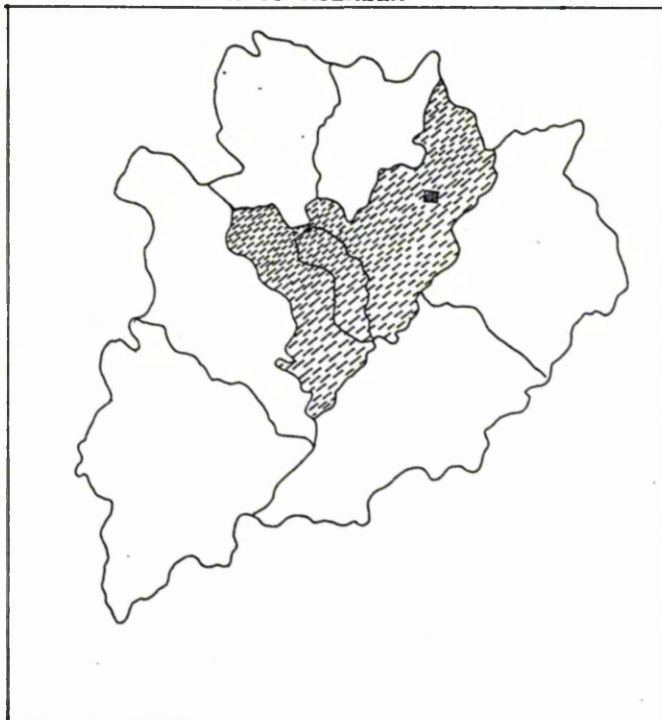
Map 2

Map 1. Map of China & Location of Guangdong Province

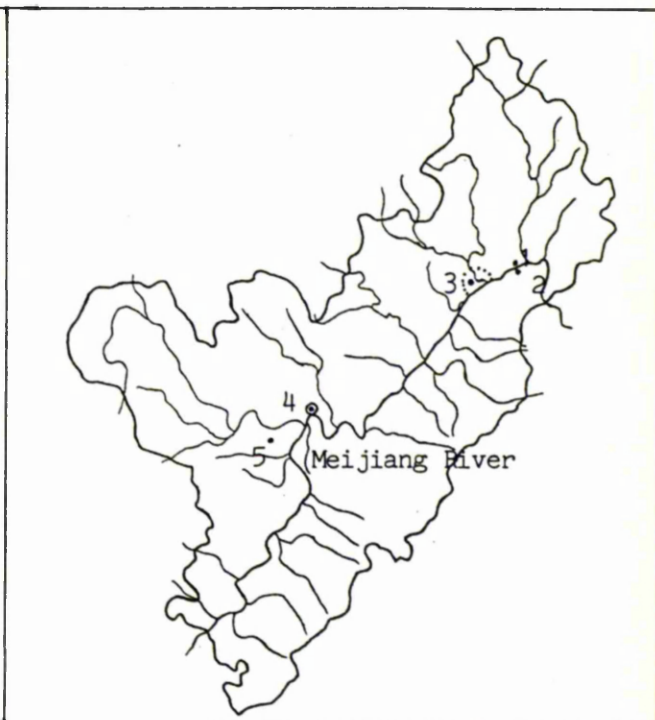
Map 2. Map of Guangdong & Location of Meizhou Region

1. Shantou
2. Guangzhou
3. Shenzhen
4. Macau
5. Hongkong

Map 3. Map of Meizhou Region &
Location of Meixian



Map 4. Main Rivers of Meixian



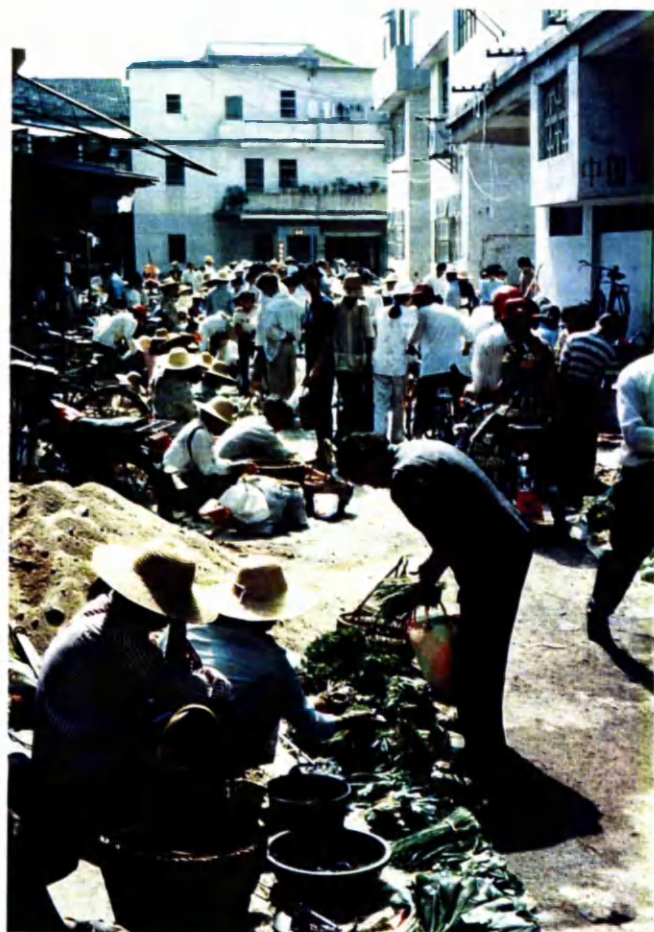
▨ Ku Village

1. Songkou Township
2. Songnan Township
3. Ku Village
4. Meizhou City
5. Meixian

○ Xiaohuangsha



1.1. Songkou bridge



1.2. view of market I



1.3. view of market II



1.4. view of market III

Chapter 2: Mapping Ku Village - The World of *Guanxi* and *Zeren*

To the Ku villagers, October was an important month because it was the harvest season of Shatian pomelo which was their primary income source. Around the lunar day of shuangjiang (Frost's Descent - 18th solar term), every household was busy in collecting their fruit and nobody was free to chat with me during the daytime. One day when I was reading a book in my room, someone knocked my door. I opened the door and found Uncle Chang's wife stood in front of my door. She held a basket and there were some bananas and pomelo inside. She smiled with a little bit embarrassment. I invited her to come in and chatted about everything under the sun with her. But I still remembered what she praised me, "Hi, Hok-Bin. You're so nice and different. Many young people came from city could not get used to the environment of village. It is so amazing that you can stay in the village for such a long time without a haughty manner like the urban people." ... There was no way to tell the methodology of anthropology and to explain to her why I stayed in village for such a long time.

*Chatting for a while, she told me that she had to prepare the lunch for her husband, who worked in the power station, and she wanted to leave. She took the fruit out from the basket and said, "These fruits are produced by our family. They are worthless. Please take them." I said, "You are so keqi (polite). You know, Uncle Si also has Shatian pomelo." She insisted to leave the fruit, "I know Uncle Si plants pomelo too. Try my pomelo. Maybe there is different taste." I felt thankful and accepted the fruit because I thought that rejecting the fruit would hurt the ganqing. My mother often told me that in village, gift-giving and gift-accepting perform the *li*. If someone sends you a gift, you have to send something back. In Chinese, that is called "qing lai li wang" (human affection comes, gifts must returns).*

Gift-giving and gift-accepting constitutes a social debt between Uncle Chang's family and me. I always bore in mind that I had to repay the social debt of Uncle Chang. I had an opportunity to join the period market in Songkou Township. So I bought some

biscuits and sweets for them in Songkou town. When I sent them gift in return, they were very happy and praised me in front of the other villagers. My uncle also appreciated my deed and though I understood the li well.

* * * *

People in Ku Village practice this kind of gift exchange so often. In everyday life, they cultivate and reproduce *guanxi*, *zeren*, indebtedness, and reciprocity through gifts-giving and banquets. It seems to me that their gift exchanges are for maintaining good feeling and relations rather than for pursuing self-interest. In my case, there is no reason to treat Uncle Chang's gift-giving as an instrumental *guanxi* practice. They sent me fruit only for the sake of showing their love and concern, and showing that they treated me as their *zijiren* (one of them) and *qinqi* (relatives), rather than for their own favor. In this situation, I could not reject their gift because it would hurt the affection (*ganqing*) and break our *guanxi*, and make them think mistakenly that I did not want to have *guanxi* with them. Sending them a gift in return implied *li*, at the same time, it affirmed that I have accepted the good will conveyed by their gift.

Ku Village is a *guanxi*-based society in which people are bound by different kinds of *guanxi* as well as *zeren*. People in *guanxi*-bonds seldom question their *zeren* to each other. They try their best to fulfill their *zeren* on different occasions for the aim of maintaining for long-term relationship, although they sometimes work it out unconsciously. But through daily life practices, their knowledge of *zeren* and principle of social contract has been confirmed and regenerated. In this chapter, I only approach an understanding of how the villagers cultivate and maintain *guanxi* with others, and define their *zeren* in everyday life. In latter chapters, I am going to see how the villagers extended and applied the principle of *zeren* to define their *guanxi* with the state, and justify their resistance to the state policies. Before coming to the theme, I would like to provide some background information about my field site.

2.1. Introducing the Brief Local History of Meixian

Meixian Prefecture is located at the northeast of Guangdong and at the border region of Fujian, Guangdong and Jiangxi provinces (see Map 1 & 2). It is a hilly region situated at south of the Wuling Mountain Ranges and topographically slopes from north to south with the Yinna Mountains lying in the middle. About 85% of the area are hills which are less than 500 meters above sea level. Most of the arable land is scattered in the hilly area. So local people describe Meixian as '*ba shan, yi shui, yi fen tian*' (eight mountains, one river and one piece of land). There are three major rivers (Meijiang, Tingjiang and Hanjiang) and 51 small rivers running across Meixian (see Map 4). The terrain of Meixian historically inhibits with its communication with the outside world. Therefore, in the reform period, improvement of transportation has been the main task of the Meixian government. Many highways have been constructed and Guang-Mei-Shan railway was completed in 1995. The terrain of Meixian physically thwarts the cold currents from the north and checks typhoons from the south. Meixian has a subtropical monsoon climate with an annual mean temperature of 20.6-21.4 degrees centigrade. The frost-free period of the year lasts about 310 days. The annual precipitation of Meixian approximates 1500 mm. Rainfall is plentiful during the typhoon season of June, July and August. This natural condition is favorable for the development of farming and forestry (Meixian Local History Editorial Committee, 1995).

Meixian has a long history. Before the Qin Dynasty (221 B.C. - 206 B.C.), the region south of the Wuling Mountains was known Nanyue and regarded as a "barbarian and uncivilized land". According to the record of local history, Qinshihuang, the first emperor of the Qin Dynasty, sent Zhao Tuo to develop Nanyue and set up three prefectures, namely, Guilin, Xiang and Nanhai. The area around Meixian first belonged to Nanhai Prefecture. Then the administrative division changed time and again due to the development of economy and the growth of population. The name of Meixian was first used in the early years of the Republic of China. At present, Meixian Prefecture consists of one city and six counties (Meixian Local History Editorial Committee, 1995).

The majority of the population in Meixian is Hakka, which is a special group of Han people in China. There is a consensus among the scholars of Hakka studies

that the Hakka are descendants of the Han nationality migrating southward from central China in ancient times.¹ Around the 4th century, in central China, the political, economic and cultural center at that time, there were increasingly sharp national and class contradictions and endless internal wars. To avoid the war devastation, a great number of local people in central China migrated southward across the Yangze River. During the Tang and Song Dynasties, places south of the Yangze were subjected to wars and natural disasters, which once again forced these people to move further southward. Because Guangdong was not their place of origin, they became the guest (*ke* in Mandarin, *hak* in local dialect) of Guangdong.² In the reign of Emperor Yuan Di of the Eastern Jin Dynasty, local government described these immigrants from north in registration books as "Hakka household" (guest households) in local dialect. So the term "Hakkas" (*ke jiaren*) came into being.

On their way, they found no places for them to live on plains and most of them had to settle down in hilly areas and mountainous regions. For the sake of self-protection, these "Hakkas" mostly lived in groups in out-of-the-way mountains and led a life of seclusion. Therefore, the Hakkas often say that "there must be guests in mountains, and no guests live in places other than mountains". Geographic limitation prevents the Hakkas from interacting with local people of Guangdong. So they are not totally assimilated by the local culture. They practice many traditional rituals and customs. According to many linguistic studies, the Hakka language almost completely retains the pronunciation of ancient Chinese (e.g. Lai & Ye, 1994; Liu, 1994; Luo, 1994). The Hakkas are proud of their language. Huang Zhun-xian, a famous Hakka poet in the late Qing, stated in his poetry: *"fangyan zhuzheng*

¹ People interested in Hakkas can read Xie and Zheng edited (1994) *The Proceedings of the International Conference on Hakkaology*.

² Recently, there are some scholars such as Wu Fu-wen begin to question the origins of the name "Hakka". As he says: "Most scholars say it refers to the 'guest' status of the Hakkas, or else to Xiajia or the 'Hele'. I believe these views to be wrong. Hakka is more than just a word; it is a cultural symbol, unique in content, and a name that the Hakka themselves accept. It is particularly noteworthy, with regard to this Hakka sense of self-identity, that the further south the Hakka live the stronger is this sense. The other is that the *She* people also call themselves '*She* guests' or 'Mountain guests'. This is because the destiny of the *She* and that of the Hakka is the same." (Wu, 1994:25).

zhongyuanyun, lisu youcun Sandaiqian" (the Central rhyme can be discovered in local dialect, and the ritual of the *Sandai* dynasty can be found in the local customs).³

Due to the above historical background, Hakkas have a tradition of paying much attention to education. In addition, the Hakkas' predecessors were new-comers to the region and most of them inhabited poor mountainous areas where farmland was scarce. So the only way for them to improve their livelihood and social status was to undertake the imperial examination. This situation forced the Hakkas to form the tradition of sending their children, especially the sons, to schools even though their lives were usually hard, even if this meant having to sell their houses and land. There were also many schools built in the region and many Hakkas passed the imperial examination. In the middle period of the Qing Dynasty, education in the area was quite advanced. Because the males used most of their time in preparation for imperial examination, the females had to perform both household and farm work. It is well known that the Hakka women do as much manual work as the men. The migration of the Hakkas males made the females become the heads of families and households. They took up the role of their husbands, e.g. farm work, teaching and raising their children, looking after the parents of their family, and making decisions for the family.

Meixian Prefecture is one of Guangdong Province's renowned native homes of overseas Chinese (*qiaoxiang*). About 1530,000 Chinese who reside overseas are Hakka. They are scattered in more than 50 countries and regions such as Mauritius, Australia, U.K, U.S.A, Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, Hong Kong, Macau and so on. The main reason for the migrations was poverty. Meixian Prefecture used to be a poor hilly area with little arable land. When natural calamities came, many people had to leave their native places to make a living in Southeast Asia and other places. The overseas Chinese had a close connection with their native home. The majority of overseas Chinese are small businessmen or laborers who work hard to collect money to support their families or support public welfare (such as setting up schools and building bridges, roads and hospitals) in their native home (see Picture 2.1). This has

³ . The people in Meixian speak Hakka dialect. Hakka dialect still does not have standard translation in alphabetic writing. To avoid any confusion, I translate all speech from Hakka to Mandarin.

become the tradition of overseas Chinese. For example, in Meixian, three concrete bridges connecting the city and Songkou Town on the Meijiang River were built before the Communist China with the funds collected by overseas Chinese. The city's 29 high schools all received financial support from overseas Chinese.

The hardship of life also forced the Hakkas to resist the heavy taxes of the government throughout the dynasties and to join in revolutions when they faced the survival crises because of natural disaster. There were many leaders in China's different revolutions who were Hakka, e.g. Hong Xiu-quan in the Taiping revolution, Sun Yet-sen in the Revolution of 1911, Ye Jian-ying, Chen Yi, Zhu De and Deng Xiao-ping in the Revolution of Communist. Erbaugh (1994) in her article *The Secret History of the Hakkas: The Chinese Revolution as A Hakka Enterprise* has identified the common bond among these leaders. She tried to articulate the Hakka connection as a vital factor in the CCP revolution. As she declares,

Hakka ties matter for at least three reasons. When Hakka networks are uncovered, many vital political connections appear. Second, Hakka ethnic solidarity reveals the synergy between a cultural tradition and a historic moment. Hakka poverty made land reform worthwhile. Socialist revolution desperately needed traditional Hakka mobility, military prowess, and its strategically useful common language. Third, Hakka history of the Long March era has been transformed into an icon of dissent which Deng Xiao-ping and his associates have promoted as an alternative ideal to Maoist invocations of Yan'an. Since the 1989 Beijing massacre Deng's allies have yet again reprocessed these Hakka-based symbols in order to praise the military and solicit overseas investment (Erbaugh, 1994:758).

But any intention of essentialising Hakka as some kinds of outside rules or principles, which creating some kind of social behaviors, would be misplaced. To me Hakkas are more than a language ethnic group; they are a cultural resource which is articulated by human actors purposefully in the pursuit of their interests at specific historical times. So we cannot draw a simple conclusion that Hakkas as such are more rebellious and insurgent.

Now the Hakkas mainly concentrate in Meixian of Guangdong, and some are scattered in Hunan, Jiangxi, and Sichuan provinces. According to the Meixian almanac of 1995, the population of Meixian is about 580.5 thousands in 1994. The agricultural population occupies 86.99% (505 thousands) of the total population. In



the reform period, its agriculture got rid of the former model of "grain only", and transformed into diversified commercial economy. Fruit production has become the dominant agriculture since the mid-1980s. In 1994, the fruit tree covered 324.1 thousand hectares and the output was about 207.6 thousand tons. The Shatian pomelo occupies 141.6 thousands hectares of fruit production area and has become the pillar of the local economy. The township enterprises and industries also flourished in these ten years.

2.2. The Contour of Ku Village

Ku Village comes within the jurisdiction of Songnan Township. Songnan is one of the townships in Meixian, which is located at the northeast of Meixian (see Map 3 & 4). Its other name is "poor *nan*" (*qiong nan*) which means that this place is very poor. Before the rural reform in 1978, the income of Songnan villagers mainly depended on rice production. Due to the hilly area and limited arable land, the average income of Songnan was lower than national average income before rural reform. Most areas of Mei county were defined by the government as "poor mountain regions" (*pinkun shanqu*). Songnan is in charge of 13 administrative districts (*guanli qu*) and 148 village committees with a population of 1.6 thousand. Before Deng's reform period, paddy cultivation was the dominant farming activity. Like other townships, after Meixian was designated as the country's major commercial pomelo-producing base in 1986, pomelo plantations became the most important income source of every peasant household.

Under the new administrative system which was established in the early 1980s, there are two types of Cun (village) -- the administrative village (*xing zheng cun*) and the natural village (*zi ran cun*). A natural village is mainly defined by territorial occupation, while an administrative village usually consists of several natural villages. A natural village may be divided into several "villager groups" (*cun min xiao zu*). According to this definition, Xiaohuangsha, my field area, is an administrative village; and Ku Village, where I stayed, is a natural village. The government now calls the administrative village a new name: "administrative district" (*guan li qu*). Based on the administrative hierarchy of the Chinese government, *guan li qu* is the organization of government at the lowest level (see Table 2.1).

Table 2.1. New Administrative System

Province	(Sheng)
City	(Shi)
County	(Xian)
Township	(Xiang)
Administrative District	(Xing Zheng Cun)
Natural Villages and Groups	(Zhi Ran Cun & Cun Min Xiao Zu)

Xiaohuangsha is one of the administrative districts of Songnan Xiang, which includes eight natural villages (including Ku Village) and eight village committees with 11 surnames (Map 4). The population of Xiaohuangsha is about 1,200 and its households total 269. Ku Village was divided into two *cun min xiao zu*. Like other administrative districts, almost all the villagers of Xiaohuangsha mainly engage in agriculture. The main grain is paddy rice although the cultivating area has been decreasing over the past ten years (see Table 2.2). Now the dominant crop is Shatian pomelo which is the main income of peasant households.

Ku Village is a localized residential unit which is clearly separated from the other adjacent lineage villages by a narrow village lane. It is a small natural village with a single-surname (Ku) lineage, as is common in rural China. All male members of the same generation within a given lineage consider themselves to be brothers and they often use appropriate fraternal forms of address. All the members of the same generation consider themselves to be sisters or brothers and employ the same terms of address as those used by real brothers and sisters. The different generations, in the same way, use appropriate kinship terms, calling one another uncles and nephews, and aunt and nieces, so that everyone within Ku Village is incorporated linguistically into a family-like group. But the lineage is not the extended family. It is a corporate group with economic, ritual, political, religious, and military functions.

In Ku Village, the population was about 260 in 1992 and its households totaled about 61 (see Table 2.2). According to the former accountant, who keeps the census data and statistical data of Ku Village, the number of households and the population of Ku Village stayed constant during these forty years. Although some

young people have become migrant labourers in the Pearl River Delta (PRD), Special Economic Zones (SEZ) and Guangzhou in the reform era, because of the *hukou* system (household registration), it is difficult for them to change their official identity as *nongmin* (peasants). Even though they have worked full-time in a factory for a long time and de facto they no longer participate in agriculture activities, they are still labeled as *nongmin* because it is inherited. There are some exceptional cases like Brother Ming, who joined the Liberation Army and gained a non-peasant *hukou* after he was assigned a job in the city by the government. Succeeding at school is another way the villagers are able to change their household registration. If the young villagers can enter the university, they are assigned a job in a city after graduation and given a non-peasant *hukou*. At present, the villagers can also use money to buy an urban *hukou*.

Table 2.2. Selected Statistics of Songnan Township and Ku Village

Year	Total Population		Total Household		Total Manpower		Arable Area	
	Ku Vill	Songnan	Ku Vill	Songnan	Ku Vill	Songnan	Ku Vill	Songnan
1978	255	/	61	/	90	/	246	/
1981	/	16,515	/	4,044	/	6,541	/	13,772
1985	/	15,924	/	3,823	/	7,286	/	/
1992	260	16,723	61	4,090	95	7,535	228	12,848

Source: *Commune Statistic Data of Mei County in 1981; Statistics of Income Distribution of Agricultural Economy in Mei County in 1985; The Data of Basic Situation of Mei County's Villages in 1992*. The data of Ku Village is provided by the former accountant of Ku Village.

All the villagers are engaged in agriculture in Ku Village. The predominant crop before 1978 was paddy rice. The minor crops are vegetables, sweet potatoes, peanuts, bananas, sugar cane, oranges, tangerines and so on. There are only about 200 *mu* of arable land scattered in the mountain village, averaging 8 *fen* per villager (see Table I). But after the introduction of pomelo plantation projects in the mid-1980s, the villagers opened up the wasteland at the hillside. Now there are 4 households owning 8 *mu* private plots. The economic transformation of Ku Village will be presented in detail in Chapter Four.

Ku Village is surrounded by a range of craggy mountains as in Chinese painting (see Picture 2.2 & Picture 2.3).⁴ Although in mountainous area, Ku Village is not so remote. But the transportation of Ku Village is poor since there is only one small path from Ku Village to Songkou town (the nearest market town). After a rain, the road will become muddy and rugged. People easily get stuck in the mud. The mountain interferes with Ku Village's communication with the outside world. Some old female villagers told me that they have never been to Meixian. To the villagers, the nearest town is Songkou Town. If riding a bicycle, people have to spend 30 to 45 minutes to get there. If walking, people have to spend more than an hour. If villagers go to the county seat, they have to take the long-distance bus in Songkou township. Traveling to Meixian from Songkou still requires half a day.

There is a small stream running across Ku Village and field. The villagers told me that the stream joins with the main river (*Mei Jiang*) of Mei county. The river is the primary water source of Ku Village. Women wash their clothes, vegetables, dishes, and cooking instruments at the riverside (see Picture 2.4). They also irrigate their fields and trees by using a small electric pump to extract water from the stream. The river also provides the electricity for the village because they have built a small dam and electricity station at the upper reaches of the river back in the days of the communes. The river also provides much fun for the children for, fishing, and collecting stones and shells. But the villagers complain that in these ten years, chemical fertilizers which are popularly utilized for the pomelo plantation have polluted the river. Many households have dug the wells for drinking water.

In the village, the pomelo trees almost cover all the arable land and lower hillsides. Looking down at the mountain, we can find the village is very green and lush. The traditional buildings and the modern story buildings are mixed together. There are many modern two-story houses being built in the village after the rural reforms in Deng's era. To me the outstanding styles are still the traditional palace-like house and "circling dragon" house (see Figure 2.1).

⁴. For protecting the informants and the village, I change the name of the informants and the original name of the village to Ku Village.

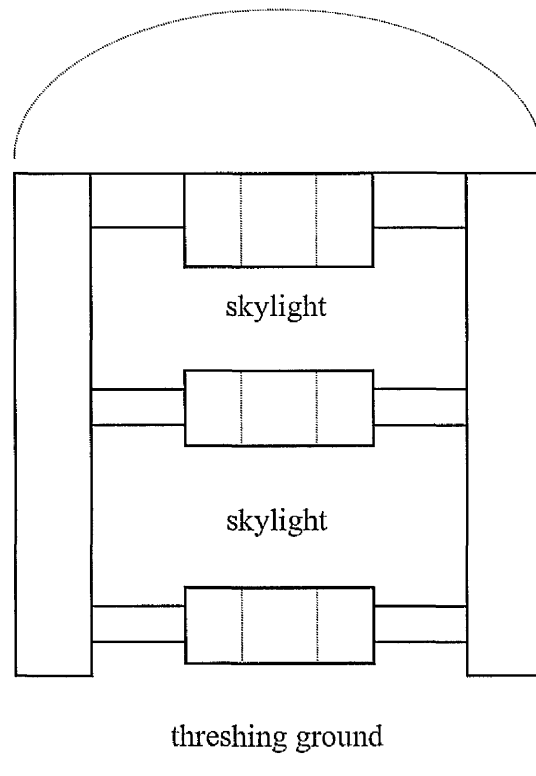


Figure 1. The Structure of Palace-like House

The palace-like house is similar to the mansions of the Han people in central China. It employs a combination of building techniques, such as the "pillar and beam construction" and "pillar-and transverse tie beams", which are traditional Chinese architectural features. The building places emphasis on layout, direction, priority, symmetry and outlook. The house is characterized by numerous halls and skylights (see Figure 1). The three main halls are flanked by two or four wing chambers serving as living quarters, which are divided into several rooms centering around sitting rooms.

Generally, the new house is only occupied by one household, but there are four to five households living in a traditional house, which the villagers call a *dawu* (big house). People living in the same big house have a closer kin relationship. The "circling dragon" house is located at the center of the village, which is the ancestral hall of the Kus. The main features of the circling dragon house include a back

enclosure in the shape of a horse's hoof which is popularly known as the "circling dragon". The front hall of the circling dragon house is used by the villagers as their ancestral hall. The villagers called the ancestral hall *zugong ting* in local dialect, where is the important location for collective activities in the village such as collective worship. In front of the ancestral hall, there are two fishponds which are for the sake of *fengshui* (geomagnetic omen). In Ku Village, every big house has its own name. There were six big houses, e.g. Shan Yu House, Chen Qing Estate, and so on.

2.3. Genealogy of Ku

Every village has its own story about its history. Ku Village also has the tale of the Ku lineage. All the males are descended on their fathers' side from a common ancestor. The name of the ancestral hall in Ku Village is called "Xin-an Tong" (see Picture 2.5). The ancestral cult was a central component of the villagers' worldview. To honor their ancestors and affirm their common roots in the past, the Kus built an ancestral hall within the village which kept the sacred tablets and records containing the genealogies of their village. The written genealogy (*zupu*) was kept by the elders of each lineage; it includes the names of all the male members of group down through the generations. These registers serve as legal documents which defined the exact membership of the lineage and its various sub-branches and specified who could share the ancestral estate owned by the lineage. There was a *zupu* including the members of the whole village, and there was also another kind of *zupu* that includes only the members of the sub-kin which live in the same *dawu* (big house). Ku's *zupu* of the whole village was burnt in Cultural Revolution. So in fact, the younger generation had never seen their Ku genealogy before. In the 1990s, the elderly in Ku Village began to organize the villagers to reconstruct their ancestral hall. They also planned to reconstruct their *zupu*. They told me that some overseas villagers still maintained their sub-genealogies. It was quite time-consuming to collect the sub-genealogies and rebuild the *zupu* of the whole village. When I had left the village, they still had not started to do this.

According to the inscription on a tablet in the Ku ancestral hall, "the scions of Ku Village originally lived in Xin-an township of Da-tong Prefecture (*fu*) in Shanxi

province. Now the name of Xin-an township has been changed to Wei township. Their ancestor, Ku Bi, in Bei-wei of Nan-bei Dynasty was a Minister (*Shangshu*) of the Ministry of Official Personnel Affairs (*libu*). A Minister in the Bei-wei and Bei Dynasty was equal to a Prime Minister (*Zaixiang*). Ku Bi Gong's title was Ling Shou Hou (noble). The emperor of Wei Dynasty praised him: 'An official like Ku-Bi Gong is a treasure of the state'. The founder of Ku Village was a successful candidate in the highest imperial examination (*Jinshi*) of Ming Dynasty. He was the 41st descendant of Ku Bi Gong. They have been settled at the present location for several hundred years.

Comparatively speaking, the women of the village showed little interest in its origin or its genealogy. But the old men often told me stories about the ancestry and origins of the village. Some like Uncle Bin, one of my informants who is a active informal leader in Ku Village, were keen to let me see the Ku genealogy. On the first day I arrived at the village, Uncle Si brought me to visit the ancestral hall and worship the ancestors. In their view, I need to know the history of the my ancestors and the village because I am a male descendant. They also perceived my coming as *renzu guizhong* (acknowledgment of ancestor). Like the female villagers, some young male villagers in their twenties or thirties had little interest in their genealogy. They never talked with me about their ancestors or their origins.

The ancestral hall was also an important economic organization in the village before 1949. There was a collective ownership of ancestral estates attached to ancestral halls. The ancestral hall elders rented out their public land, orchards, and fishponds, and used the income to finance the ancestor-worshipping ceremonies. During Chinese New Year or other important traditional festivals, like *yuanxiao* and *zhongqiu*, the villager would offer sacrifices to their ancestors. The ancestral hall also played the function of social welfare. The collective property was partly used for supporting the education of young villagers, as well as supporting the widows and orphans who were in need.⁵ The ancestral hall became public property after collectivization in the 1950s. It became the granary for the production team.

⁵. The importance of kinship and lineage in local political economy has been affirmed by many studies of South China's villages (Whyte & Parish, 1978; Potter & Potter, 1990).

Religious activities were also totally banned by the government in the collective era. The hall was returned to villagers in the late 1970s and was repaired by the villagers. In Chapter Eight, I will discuss how the Ku villagers reconstructed their ancestral hall and organized the Management Committee of the Ancestral Hall after the rural reforms.

Before 1949, like the other areas of rural China, the formation of the traditional authority in rural China was partially based upon the differences in terms of generation, age and sex. These differences among the individuals either in a domestic group or in a larger kin group determined the hierarchical position in the rural communities (e.g. Baker, 1979; Potter & Potter, 1990; Huang, 1985). Additionally, the traditional authority was based on the economic power, education level and political connections of the individuals. As Schurmann pointed out, "the local leaders' economic power was based on land ownership, its political power was based on its relationships to the state bureaucracy, and its social power was based on its traditional status" (1968:497). The economic power made some households capable of holding expensive ceremonies, making large religious contributions and giving personal loans and donations. The connection with local government also made some households able to represent them in bargaining with the state. So in rural China during the pre-communist period, the legitimacy of local leaders was granted by villagers based on their contribution to the village (Duara, 1987; Siu, 1989; Zhang, 1991; Fei, 1992). Basically there were two kinds of leaders in Ku Village. The 'elder' of the lineage, the oldest men in the most senior generation, were the ritual leaders in the ancestor-worshipping ceremonies in the hall. They also helped to manage the ancestral property. The other kind of the leaders was the wealthy men of high status. They included the landlords, local despots, and gentry graduates of the nationwide civil service examination, who qualified for official office. For instance, the households of Yu Qing House earned the respect of the villagers because most of their male members had high education; the households of Chen Qing Estate occupied high social hierarchy because of their economic power.

Hakka people pay much attention to *fengshui*.⁶ *Fengshui* is a very abstruse philosophy about how to maintain harmony between nature and human beings. As Feuchtwang (1982) states, in south China, people's graves, houses, and ancestral halls are located and constructed conforming to the rules of *fengshui*. *Fengshui* is strongly believed to be a primary source of luck and efficacy, which will affect their wealth and the continuity of the line of Ku. Success is associated with the control of good *fengshui*, and vice versa. *Fengshui* could be a beneficial force if it is properly handled, but instead, it could also be extremely dangerous and destructive if it is used improperly or clumsily. *Fengshui* teachers or specialists are employed to design villages, houses, tombs, ancestral halls, and other structures so that they will draw maximum power from the invisible currents flowing over the earth, while avoiding the bad influences. The villagers believe that if the *fengshui* design is wrong, it might lead to the death or impoverishment of the inhabitants. So within each village the ancestral halls, and even the doors and windows of houses and the shape of their roofs, are determined by advice from *fengshui* specialists. To "modern" people, *fengshui* is regarded as "backward" and "uncivilized", but to the villagers, it is essential for their survival.

My informant, Brother Li, told me a story about Ku Village's *fengshui*. According to his father, he said, Ku Village was not a single surname village. There had been three lineages of other surnames when their ancestor settled there long time ago. But after several generations, the other lineages disappeared because of their bad geomagnetic omen (*fengshui*). Brother Li explained to me:

The discontinuity of other lineages was because of their wrong *fengshui*. Those lineage with a strong *fengshui* will overcome the weak ones. The other lineage couldn't get their male descendants, and generation after generation, their lineage was eventually wiped out.

You see, the *fengshui* of Ku's ancestral hall is very good according to the *fengshui* teachers (*xiansheng*). They told us the range of mountains surrounding Ku Village looks like an ancient folding chair, and the stream running across the village is like a jade waistband of traditional officials. This kind of *fengshui* makes many descendants obtain high honor in education and become officials.

⁶. Readers interested in Chinese geomancy (*fengshui*) can see Stephen. D. R. Feuchtwang's book *An Anthropological Analysis of Chinese Geomancy*, 1982 or Stephen Skinner, *The Living Earth Manual of Fengshui*.

Like other Hakka people, Ku villagers also pay much attention to education. The Songxi Primary School was set up by the Ku villagers in the late Qing. At the time, the villagers were poor and they could not raise enough funds among the villagers. So Uncle Si's grand father went to Indonesia three times to raise funds among the overseas fellow villagers (*tongxiang*). My relatives asked me to remember the contribution of my great-grandfather (*zengzufu*) and continue his honourable work. The local school was located at the center of Xiaohuang for the sake of providing education for the children from other neighboring villages. The school was run and funded by the local people. It was one of the important local organizations in the village because most of their teachers are people with prestige and influence in their villages. They are involved in many important affairs in the village. But the school was handed over to the Communist state after 1949.

2.4. The World of Guanxi and Zeren

To the villagers, Ku Village is a world of multiple *guanxi* and *zeren*. Most of their *guanxi* networks are ordained e.g. kinship *guanxi*, parent/children *guanxi*, husband/wife *guanxi*, and ancestor/descendant *guanxi*. Within *guanxi* circles and networks, their mutual *zeren* and rights have been pre-defined. By saying that their *zeren* has been pre-defined, this implies there is a norm or principle of mutual *zeren* which was collectively constructed and shared by the members in the community. Nevertheless, the pre-defined *zeren* is never static. It is socially constructed and re-constructed in everyday practices through which their conception of *zeren* within *guanxi* was transmitted from generation to generation. On many different occasions the Ku villagers perform and fulfill their *zeren* within the ordained *guanxi*. Broadly, I classify these occasions into two kinds: important ceremonies and everyday life.

Performing Mutual Zeren in Important ceremonies

The Ku villagers usually call the important events and ceremonies "*dashi*", which includes funerals, weddings, birthday celebrations, and ancestral worship. *Dashi* mostly involves a lot of people. The original meaning of the Chinese word *shi*

can be interpreted into English as "affair", or "matter" or "business". It is *dashi* not only because it is important, but also the expenditure is huge and needs support from other households. As the villagers are required to perform rituals and celebrations in *dashi*, so professionals concerning rituals, e.g. *fengshui* masters, monks (*he shang*), and nuns (*ni gu*), will be invited to hold the ceremonies. Gift exchange is also very important in *dashi*. As Sahlins states,

The connection between material flow and social relations is reciprocal. A specific social relation may constrain a given movement of goods, but a specific transaction - by the same token - suggests a particular social relation. If friends make gifts, gifts make friends (Sahlins, 1972:186).

So gift exchange in itself reflects an expectation of keeping a long-term relationship between the giver and recipient.⁷

Funerals

Funerals are, to the villagers, or generally speaking to Hakka, a very important *dashi*. Many scholarly efforts have been devoted to the Chinese death ritual (e.g. Watson & Rawski, 1988). Some have argued that the funeral is an important arena to reinforce *guanxi* (e.g. Yan, 1996; Kipnis, 1997). Ku Village does not display significant differences from other places of rural China, but the detail of procedure or ritual is somewhat different.

During my fieldwork period, I have participated in and observed two funerals which involved almost all the households in the village. In the funerals, we can discover the reciprocal relationship between the living and the dead, and between the living and the living (see Picture 2.6). To the villagers, the death of their parents or grandparents does not imply that they have finished their *zeren*. As Watson notes, "death does not terminate relationships of reciprocity among Chinese, it simply transforms these ties and often makes them stronger" (1988:9). The offerings of food and paper models e.g. paper money, paper maids and servants, paper TVs, paper cars and so on, constitute the most important part of the funeral, which also constitute part

⁷. Anyone interested in the practice of gift exchange in rural China can read Yan (1996).

of the children's *zeren* to their parents. They believed that if they do not offer enough food and things to their parents, they will become hungry ghosts and unhappy in *yinjian* (the nether region), because the paper models represent the basic needs of the afterlife. The children who do not fulfill their *zeren* would be condemned as unfilial children (*buxiaozi*). They will lose face (*mianzi*) and could not raise their head (*tai bu qi tou*) in front of the other villagers. Children express their filial piety (*xiaoxun*) through offerings; at the same time, they also expect future blessings from the dead.

At the funeral, most households in the village send at least one representative to pay respects to the dead (see Picture 2.7). The households which have closer *guanxi* with the deceased or its household would send more people to help the funeral. The agnates and affines of the deceased also make every effort to participate in the funeral. Absence from a funeral is considered an extremely unfriendly gesture and may destroy the existing interpersonal relationships. Offerings were not only presented by the family members, but also from the members within Ku Village, and the agnates and affines from other villages. Some present food; some present flags; some offer paper models; some burn joss sticks and candles; some only come to kowtow (*koutou*). It depends on how close their *guanxi* is with the deceased or that household. The villagers or other relatives and friend (*qinqi pengyou*) attend the funeral not only to show their respect to the deceased, they also came to give some material and emotional support to the household of the deceased. Most of them sent *baijing* (white moneys).⁸ The amount depends on their economic capability, from 5 yuan to 200 yuan. A gift-list book was often prepared to record the name of visitors and the amount of money they contributed. For showing the appreciation of the deceased's survivors, a simple meal or banquet was often provided at the end of the final day of the funeral in return. As Yan (1996) says, the banquets can be viewed as an immediate reciprocity made by the host to the guests.

During the funeral, there are some ritual specialists who were in charge of all the ceremony. Not only the old people participated into the funeral, the young people also helped a lot. They moved the table, carried the coffin, beat drums and

⁸. White money (*baijin*) was sent to the household of the deceased for support. Red money (*hongjin*) was sent at weddings. White in Chinese signifies something bad or unfortunate. Red in Chinese signifies something good and happy.

gongs (*qiaoluo dagu*) and did other heavy work. Anyone giving assistance would receive the red pocket money (*hongbao*) in return for good fortune (*lishi*). The children also came to join in fun (*cou renao*). The local primary school also sent a team of student representatives to pay respect to the deceased. The process of the funeral constitutes part of their experience in which the younger generation is socialized. They learn the norms and values of the village through the funeral rituals without any formal training.

Wedding

According to other studies of rural China, weddings are considered as one of the most important rituals in rural China (Baker, 1979; Whyte & Parish, 1980; Potter & Potter, 1990; Yan, 1996; Kipnis, 1997). However, in Ku Village, not all the households have wedding ceremonies. During my stay in Ku Village, I did not have opportunity to participate in any weddings, so all the information about weddings is based on the narration of my informants.

The reasons for not having a wedding ceremony were complicated. Some did not hold a ceremony because of financial difficulties, and some were married secretly due to poor relationships with many villagers. Some kept their marriages in low-profile to avoid the attention of village cadres because they were getting married earlier than the legal marriage age. As Brother Xin told me, "Having a wedding means that we announce our engagement openly. They (village cadres) then have right to investigate our marriage certificate and fine us. You know, we violate the Marriage Law."

Others chose not to have a wedding because they got their wives from poor remote areas in other provinces, e.g. Jiangxi and Hunan.⁹ To them, it was something not very honourable, in their words, *diulian* (losing face). In their eyes, only poor families had to get wives from other provinces. In Ku Village, some marriages were still arranged by parents through the matchmakers (*meiren*). The old villagers told me that they still preferred their son to get married with fellow villagers or with girls from

⁹ . To my knowledge, at least six brides came from poor areas in other provinces.

neighbour villages. The reason was that they could thus know the girls and their family backgrounds better. However, today this preference has become more and more difficult to fulfill as most young village girls like to get married with city guys or those from rich villages. As Aunt Shu-zhen said, "Ku Village is too *shan* (remote and mountainous). The girls aren't willing to stay here."¹⁰

The villagers told me that there were no more traditional wedding rituals in Ku Village because most of them thought it was outdated (*guoshi*) and some thought it was too expensive; therefore, they only invited close relatives to have a simple meal or banquet. As with funerals, the households sent only one representative to join the banquets. Most of the time, the representative was a male family member. The guests of the wedding also brought a gift in return. Popular gifts were clocks, furniture, family appliances and *jingkuan* (glass-framed artwork) on which were words of greeting. Gift could be cash. There was no fixed amount of cash, it depended on the degree of closeness between the givers and the recipients. The villagers called going to banquets "*chi xiju*" (drinking the wine of happiness). At the banquets, wine and cigarettes had to be prepared for the guests because most of them were male.

Traditionally, the bride and groom had to perform kowtow which represented repaying parents' kindness in rearing them (*fume yangyu zhi en*). The groom and bride also received monetary gifts (*hongbao*) from their parents in return. The bride also had to worship her husband's ancestors, through which the villagers would recognize her as the member of the Kus. In Ku Village, the young no longer perform kowtow, but the ritual of worshipping ancestors still maintained. The formal wedding often involves many helpers, like cooks and musicians, who work for the family during the wedding. The host family gives cash gift to them in return.

¹⁰ . Now more and more young villagers would like to choose their partners by themselves. I know of some villagers met their partners in schools and some chose their partners in factories. This caused some conflicts between parents and children. Sometimes I heard the old villagers complain about the disobedience and unfilial piety of their son/daughter-in-law.

Childbirth

Childbirth celebrations are mainly held for a son. The birth of a girl is not a cause for rejoicing to the villagers under the birth control of the Chinese government because a girl would use up their birth quota. Getting a girl means they lose an opportunity to have a son.

To Hakkas, and maybe not just Hakkas, bringing up a girl is a losing proposition (*kuiben shengyi*). As they say, daughters do not belong to them. They are reared for other families because they have to follow their husbands. In Ku Village, daughters are often likened to spilled water (*pochuqu de shui*). In contrast, sons are not only important for the continuity of family line, but also to the reproduction of Ku kinship. So in rural China, getting a son is not only one's own business (*zijia de shi*), but also the business of whole village. It is part of children's *zeren* to their parents and ancestors. "*Bu xiao you san, wu hou wei da*" (there are three kinds of unfilial piety, but not producing male offspring is the most serious one) is a famous aphorism in Chinese society, which reflects that Chinese value highly the continuity of family line.

So relatives and friends come to visit the newborn baby boy and to bring gifts to the family. The gifts consisted of various kinds of food and appliances. Chicken is the most popular food because the people think chicken is nourishing (*bu*) and good for the mother's health. The blanket and baby clothes are often the preferable gifts. Banquets are also offered by the host family in appreciation for the coming of relatives and friends. The celebration of a son's birth is an occasion of regenerating their conception of getting a son, and the idea of *zeren* between parents and children.

Mutual Visiting in Festivals

The important festivals, e.g. Lunar New Year, Mid-Autumn, and Yuanxiao, are the best times for mutual visiting. With regard to gift giving, lunar New Year visits is particularly receive attention by the villagers. From the 1st day to the 10th day of lunar January, the relatives and friends visit each other. Generally, the days of people visiting each other corresponds to their closeness. The first day of the first lunar month is often reserved for one's parents and grand parents, brothers and sisters, and the closest matrilineal relatives; the next several days are devoted to the close

agnates and friends; and then the last several days are for the less close relatives and friends. Under normal situations, the senior villagers do not visit the junior relatives. They stay at home and wait for the juniors to come to them.

No one must arrive empty handed at the visits relatives and friends during Lunar Chinese New Year. They bring different kinds of gifts, including Chinese cakes, wine, cigarettes, sweets, biscuits, fresh fruit and so forth. When the guests come, the host normally serves them tea, sweets, biscuits, or dessert. Sometimes, they also invite the guest to have lunch.

During my fieldwork, in Lunar New Year, I found the villagers did not take all the gifts from the guest. They just took some of the gifts out of the container and replaced their own gifts in. The guest normally asked the host to receive the rest of the gifts, and the host would say that their good feeling has been conveyed by their gifts and insist that the guest should take the rest back. Repeatedly expressing gratitude to each other usually happens before the guests finally leave. To the Ku villagers, the guests' container should not be empty after visiting. This represents the immediate reciprocity between the villagers. The adults also normally give *yasuiqian* (money) to the children in Lunar New Year.¹¹ I noticed that if both guest and host had children, the value of their *yasuiqian* was almost the same.¹² The gifts were normally exchanged between the same generation (*pingbei*) and friends. If the young people came to visit the senior ones, like children to parents, gifts were not expected in return.

Returning of *Huaqiao*

As I stated, Meixian Prefecture is one of Guangdong Province's renowned homes of overseas Chinese (*huaqiao*). To the villagers, return visits by *huaqiao* are a

¹¹. Readers interested in the gift-exchange in Chinese Lunar New Year can read Yan (1996) and Cohen (1990).

¹². According to Ye and Wu, the custom of Yasui can be traced back to the Han dynasty. The word yasui means to repress the devils or ghosts. In Chinese, *ya* means 'repress' and *sui* originally means 'devils' or 'ghosts'. The Money is used to protect children from wandering ghosts. But nowadays, people seldom know the meaning underlying the practice. They just think money is given for good luck in the coming new year.

dashi, especially at the beginning of the 80s. This is because the closed-door policy of the Communist government in Mao's era had limited the interaction between the rural population and their overseas relatives for about 30 years. The news of returning *huaqiao* often quickly spreads through the village, even outside villages. The returning *huaqiao* would obtain high respect from the villagers. Culturally speaking, those returning to the village were regarded as *renzu guizong* (acknowledging their ancestors and roots). To Ku villagers, it is one kind of virtue. In addition, *huaqiao* often bring benefits to the village.

There was a similar phenomena that the *huaqiao* often brought many expensive gifts, e.g. foreign style clothes, foods, bicycles, sewing machines, radios, televisions, even videocassette recorders, to their village relatives. The *xiangqin* (fellow villager), *qinqi* (relatives), *pengyou* (friends), and other agnates and affines from outside villages all came to visit the *huaqiao*. They often brought some homemade or local products (*jiexiang techan*) to the *huaqiao* for showing their love and affection. Meanwhile, the *huaqiao* had to give something in return. But the value of their gifts reflected the closeness between the *huaqiao* and the visitors. The close family members could receive an expensive gift, like TV, from the *huaqiao*, and the remote friends and relatives could get only sweets and biscuits. Through the gift exchange, we could find that *guanxi* in village society was just like Fei's analogy of throwing the stone into a lake. As he said,

Social relationships in China possess a self-centered quality. Like the ripples formed from a stone thrown into a lake, each circle spreading out from the center becomes more distant and at the same time more insignificant (Fei, 1992:65).

Most often the *huaqiao* family has to offer a banquet for the fellow villagers, relatives and friends. Since Ku Village is very small, there is no need of formal invitations. The people invite their guests by mouth (*kouxin*), even inviting the relatives and friend of other villages. The host must invite a small group of assistants, including cooks, to prepare the food. They can be the members of Ku Village or villagers from other villages. They are also paid a *hongbao* by the *huaqiao*. The size of the banquet is usually determined by the number of tables served. The number of tables is treated as an indicator that reflects the financial capacity (*caili*) of the *huaqiao*. The villagers would like to compare the value of *huaqiao*'s gift and the size of the banquet in their

daily life chatting. Sometimes they discuss the banquet in minute detail, like how many dishes for each table, and what brand of wine and cigarettes the host served. To not lose their face (*diu lian*), the *huaqiao* must at least offer ten tables at the banquets. When I was staying in the village, within a month, there were two *huaqiao* returning to village. Uncle Si's older brother came back from Indonesia for his father's funeral. He provided a big banquet (14 tables) for the fellow villagers and relatives (see Picture 2.8). After one week, Uncle Qiang's brother also came back from Indonesia but only offered five tables. Uncle Qiang was very angry and cursed his brother for losing the face of his family (*diu zijijia de lian*). The villagers were also gossiping, comparing the two *huaqiao*.

Huaqiao are often requested by the villagers to make some financial contributions to the village. Different village organizations, e.g. the ancestral hall committee, the house of the old people, schools, and the village committee, will send their representatives to visit the *huaqiao* and ask for donations. For honoring and appreciating the contribution of the *huaqiao*, the organizations will write a letter of thanks on a large red paper and put in on the wall in order to let all the people know the contribution of the *huaqiao* (see Picture 2.9). The economic power of *huaqiao* makes them or their family members in the village to become the village leaders, and sometimes influence the decisions of the village. In Chapter 8, I will explore formation of the new village leaders and how the *huaqiao* factor was articulated as a political resource of the villagers to fight against the local government and cadres.

Practicing Guanxi in Everyday Life

In addition to important ceremonies, villagers practice *guanxi* and perform *zeren* in everyday life. By contrast, there is no performance of a formal ritual or celebration in the practice of everyday life. But because there is no formal ritual and performance, people can cultivate their *guanxi* with others and perform their *zeren*. Similar to the occasion of ceremonies, their practice in daily life also plays an important role in creating life meaning and reinforcing of *guanxi* in village society.

Mutual Visits

Mutual visit among the villagers and relatives is a popular practice in daily life. The Ku villagers would like to visit each other after lunch and dinner. In Ku Village, I could easily identify which families were welcomed by villagers because every time I went to visit them, many people had gathered together there. The host often making tea (*paocha*) for the guests and the men also shared their cigarettes with other. They chatted about anything under heaven and earth (*tantian shuodi*). Mutual visiting is not only regarded by the villagers as a crucial means of meeting each other and maintaining a good relationship (*lianluo ganqing*), but also as an important occasion for sharing and spreading news about the market situation and the state policies. Sometimes they reminisce and sometimes they debate with each other. The old villagers like to tell their own stories, talk about the history of their ancestors and Ku Village, and their life experiences under Mao. They made comparisons and judgments about the government under Mao's and Deng's leadership. So in political sense, mutual visiting is not an unimportant occasion for forming their discourse and arriving at a consensus among themselves. In the later chapters, I will discuss the important role of everyday gathering and visiting in the peasants resistance.

Visiting the Patient

Visiting someone who falls ill is another occasion for showing friendship and maintaining good *guanxi*. Ku villagers, think that it is their *zeren* to take care of unfortunate villagers and comfort their families.

When I conducted my first field research in Ku Village, Brother San was seriously hurt by a falling tree at the hillside. When the villagers found him, he was unconscious. The villagers sent him to the hospital and some of them took care of him in hospital over night in shifts. The villagers visited him so often while he was staying in hospital. Some sent him money and some bought him nutritious foods. Some also voluntarily assisted and supported his family during the period of harvest. As the villagers told me, Brother San was a nice and helpful young person in Ku Village as he often actively helped others and thus had built up a good *guanxi* with the villagers.

When the old people in the village fall ill, the Old People's Association will send representatives to visit the sick and send them gifts. The relatives and friends will also come to show their regards and good feeling. In Ku Village, the villagers also perform *zeren* by supporting the old people who are without children. In short, visiting the sick is also an occasion in everyday life to maintain the mutual relationships and emotional ties among the villagers.

Exchange of Products

After de-collectivization, the villagers obtained the freedom to differentiate their production. In Ku Village, although the Shatian pomelo plantation has become the dominate production since the mid-1980s, they also produce some other kinds of fruits, e.g. bananas, oranges, yangtao, longyan, watermelon, wuhuali and so on. Some families also maintain a small piece of land for vegetable growing for self-consumption. When the villagers collected their fruits, they would send some of their products to those in their social network.

The villagers would also share their garden products, like vegetables, with other families, who have not produced that kind of product, when they cannot consume all the vegetables. When I was staying in Ku Village, the villagers sometimes sent their vegetables and fish to my uncle to show their love and concern to me.

Exchange of Labour

In Ku Village, people have a mutual *zeren* to help each other in harvest period. They do not calculate the exchange labour in wages. Their performance of labour exchange is based on the moral principle of reciprocity, e.g. mutual aid, obligation and so on. I noticed that even if households have enough labor, they still exchange their labour with other households. It is, I think, because their motivation for obtaining labour is partially for the sake of promoting of good human relationship, rather than obtaining profit.

Some households without sufficient labour still obtain the assistance from other households which have good *guanxi* with them. They are normally paid but the

wage is not precisely calculated. As the villagers said, it was only for ritual. The daughters, who are living in other villages, will also come home to help during harvest. Their *zeren* to their original family never ends, even they have got married. Sometime the relatives also come to help them in harvest.

Instrumental Guanxi in Ku Village

In Ku Village, the villagers sometimes also cultivate *guanxi* with others for personal favors. If someone suddenly presents a gift to someone with whom they have no previous interaction or good relationship, their motives will be suspected. The villagers seem to disappreciate instrumental *guanxi* building. To them, searching for self interest through inappropriate means, in their terms “*bu zhengdang shouduan*”, is immoral and against the principle of justice and equity. The villagers also believe that something relating to personal moral standing and overall capabilities should not be exchanged for material objects.

In Ku Village, I heard several cases about villagers who tried to cultivate *guanxi* with the local cadres for their own interest. For instance, last year when the public fishpond was inviting tender (*zhao biao*), for obtaining the contract, Liang (a villager) directly approached the village party secretary by presenting her gifts. In the end, the fishpond was contracted out to him without public bidding, but some villagers were very dissatisfied. I also heard some villagers, who wanted to go to *dagong* (work) in Special Economic Zone (SEZ) or Pearl River Delta (PRD), would present gifts to the cadres in order to get a certificate of single status.¹³ There were also some villagers who presented gifts to school teachers and principals for their children's college admission or graduate certificate. Uncle Si angrily told me something concerning the new village head who obtained the contract of school expansion project from Uncle Xiang, who was the principal of Songxi primary school, by sending him good wine.

In short, anyone practicing instrumental *guanxi* would be despised by the villagers. In such cases, the recipient and sender are both the target of public

¹³. For controlling the birth of the migrant labour, the Chinese government stipulates that labours have to show their certificate of single status, which is issued by the village committee.

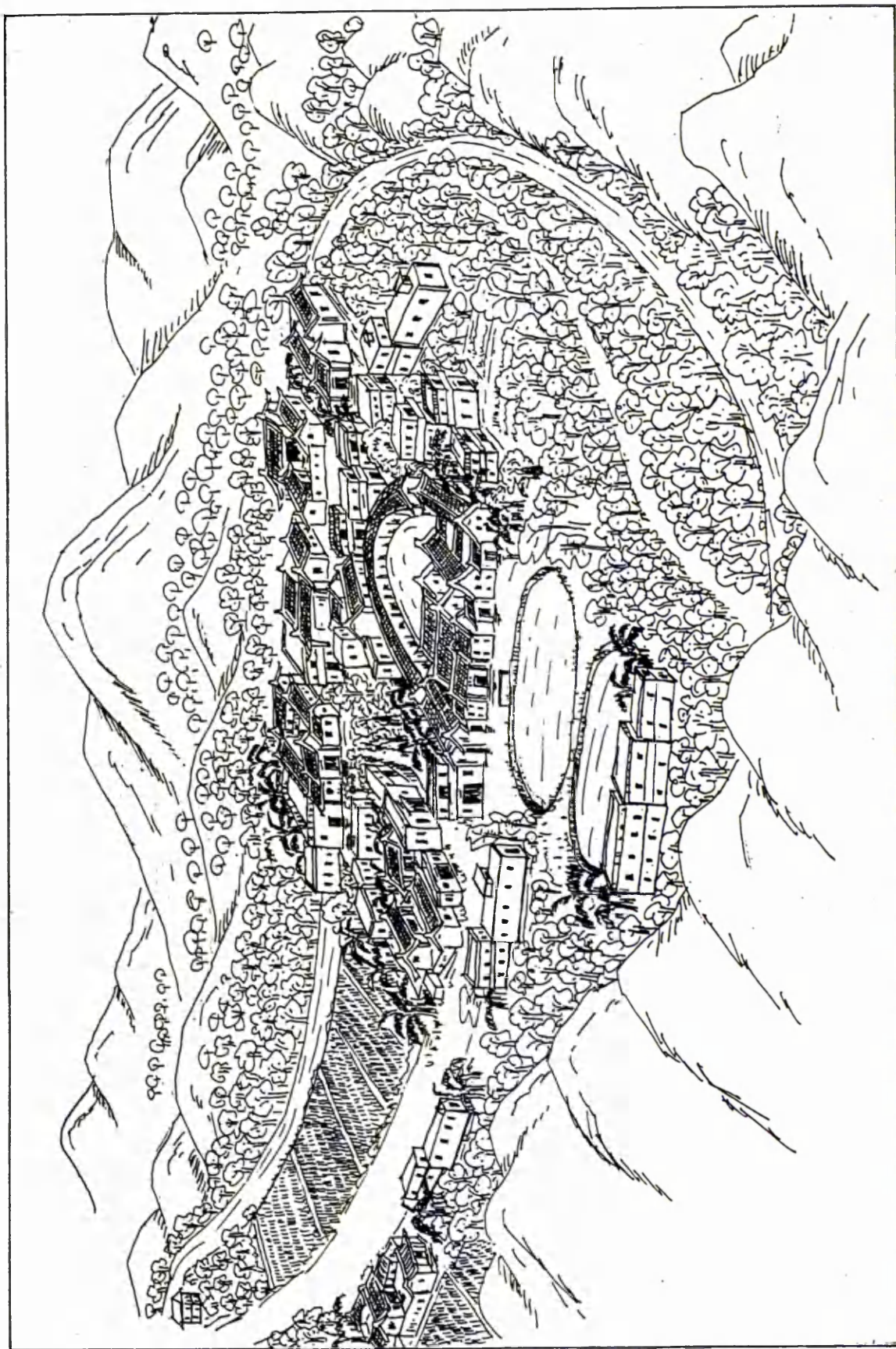
criticism. The villagers often gossip and criticize these people in their everyday chatting. There are several people who have a bad name from other villagers because they have presented gifts to the cadres.

2.5 Discussion

In traditional anthropology, especially among the structural-functionalists, kinship was considered as the structural basis upon which social relations are built. Following the suit of this tradition, Maurice Freedman (1958, 1966) developed a lineage paradigm of Chinese society, which greatly affected all the major studies of lineage organization in south China (e.g. Baker, 1966, 1979; Liu, 1985; Potter, 1970; Watson, 1975). In recent years, alongside the general critique of structuralism, the conventional anthropological concepts like "kinship" and "ritual" have been under re-examination. The universality of the lineage system in Chinese society has been challenged, and kinship is not treated as the only working system that binds people together (Chun, 1996). Rather, kinship or lineage is a cultural product which is created and recreated in practice. The social relationship in kinship is never static and stable. Getting insight from Bourdieu's concept of practical kinship, we know people in everyday life-world use kinship in practical ways. They go beyond the boundary of the kinship to build networks through all kinds of interpersonal relations. So kinship in this sense is situational and flexible.

In Ku Village, the conception of *guanxi* and the principle of mutual *zeren* which is partially generated from the kinship system is also not static. In the everyday world, Ku villagers consciously or unconsciously cultivate their *guanxi* and perform their *zeren*. As Bourdieu asserts, the social world does not work in terms of consciousness, but works in terms of practices. The villagers never systematically tell you about their philosophy of *guanxi* and *zeren*, but they practice it in daily life. Through the important ceremonies, their social relations are confirmed and strengthened. And through everyday life practices, the knowledge of *zeren* and the culture of reciprocal relations have been reproduced and generated. People participating in rituals also learn and regenerate their view of *guanxi* and *zeren*, and this becomes their frame of reference for making judgments about others' behavior and conduct.

As active agents, the Ku villagers strategically apply their principle of *zeren* and *guanxi*. They go beyond the limitation of application of this principle and manipulate it to examine their *guanxi* with the government and local cadres. Different to the person to person relationship, they define their relationship with the government not in terms of *renqing* or *ganqing*, but in terms of *zeren* or obligation, responsibilities and duties. In the contractual relationship between villagers and the government, reciprocity or mutual exchanges, which extends from person to person, are based. In Chapters 5, 6, 7, 8, I will focus on how the Ku villagers constitute their discourse in resistance by using their own principles of social contract or reciprocity.



2.2. drawing of Ku Village



2.1. village school built by overseas Chinese



2.3. view of Ku Village



2.4. everyday life of villagers



2.5. old ancestral hall



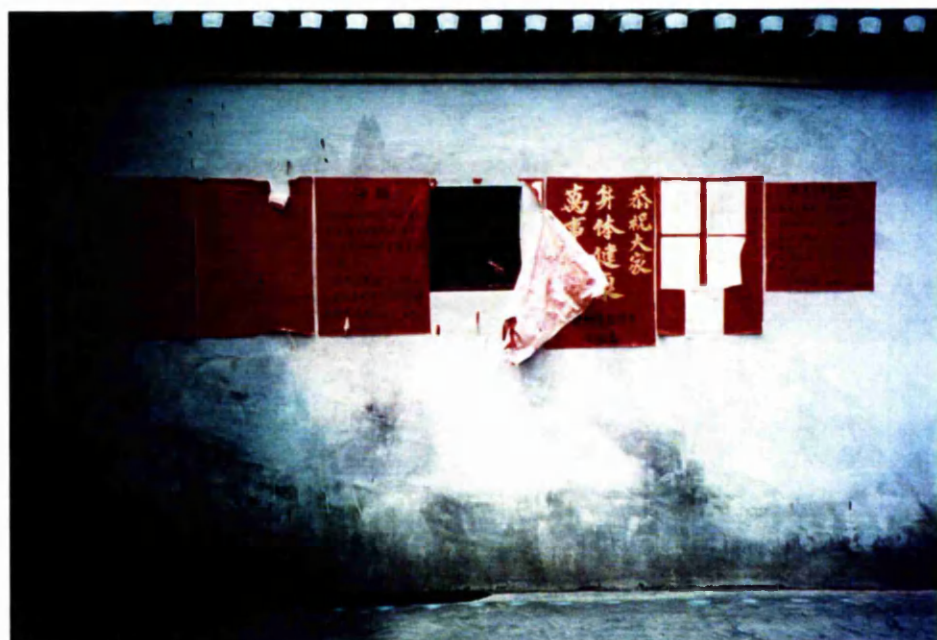
2.6. memorial ceremony



2.7. funeral



2.8. banquets



2.9. public letter of
acknowledgment

Chapter 3: The Villagers' View of the Maoist Past -- Remaking History from Below

After staying at Ku Village for about one month, I had got to know the village and the villagers well. When I had time and felt bored, I would like to visit the dawu (big house). Some dawu were still occupied by the villagers, but some had fallen down and become desolated. Like the face of old man, the desolate house recorded the historical changes of Ku Village. The wall slogans, which were painted in different campaigns in Mao's era, were still remained, but the colour was diluted by time and tide (see Picture 3.1 & 3.2). I still could read what the slogans said.

Long long live the Chinese Communist Party!
[Zhongguo gongchandang wansui]

Long long live Chairman Mao!
[Maozhuxi wansui]

All for revolution!
[Yiqie wei geming]

Carry the revolution through to the end!
[Yongyuan ganggeming]

Never forget the class struggle!
[Qianwan buyao wanji jieji douzhen]

The People's Commune is good!
[Renmin gongshi hao]

Serve the people!
[Wei renmin fuwu]

Be united, alert, earnest and lively!
[Tuanjie jingzhang yanshu huopo]

Unity is strength!
[Tuanjie jiushi liliang]

Carry forward the spirit of solidarity and militancy!
[Fayang tuanjie zhandou de jingshen]

Unite with all the forces that can be united!
[Tuanjie yiqie keyi tuanjie de liliang]

Rally around the Party's Central Committee!
[Tuanjie zai dangzhongyang zhouwei]

Long long live the great union of the people of the world!
[Quanshijie renmin datuanjie wansui]

Self reliance!
[Rili gengsheng]

Selfishness, slowing down in work, corruption and degeneration, windism and so on are the most contemptible things; otherwise, the spirit of selflessness, working hard, whole hearted devotion to public duty and so on are respectable.

Because we are the ones serving for the people, if we have any weakness, we will not hate anyone's criticism. If the criticism is positive, we will correct ourselves.

If the village does not become socialist, it will become capitalist. Can we say that we neither become socialist nor capitalist?

Every time when I took the picture and recorded these slogans down, the villagers thought I was strange and curiously asked me why I recorded them. At the time, I did not know how to answer their questions because I had no clear idea that these material would be part of my thesis. I only knew that they reflected part of the history of Ku Village. These remained slogans aroused my interest. I had several questions in my mind: when were these wall slogans painted? What did the villagers think about these slogans? Why didn't they paint over these wall slogans?

I tried to get answers from the villagers. The villagers seemed to be unable to answer my first question. The younger generation basically did not know about these slogans. They only told me that according to their parents, they were painted in the Cultural Revolution. The old villagers, who had personal experiences in Mao's era, also could not remember clearly the time these slogans were painted. Some told me during "tugai" (land reform); some told me during "siqing" (the Four Cleanups); some told me during "gongshe de shihou" (the Commune era); some told me during "wenhua dageming" (the Cultural Revolution)... Their memory of history under Mao was fragmented.

Regarding the second and third questions, I also could not get a consistent answer. Some told me they never thought about this question; some said that they just had not any intention to clear these slogans; some told me dawu was not their own property, they could not change anything without the consent from other households; some told me that the slogans were painted by the brigade, so it was the brigade's obligation to clear it; some told me they did not want to arouse any trouble. People in Ku Village had different attitudes toward these slogans. But I still remembered one of the old villagers said "If you forget the past, you cannot learn the lesson from it". This was a sentence filled with wisdom. I wondered if he meant they wanted to keep the slogans as the reminder to themselves and to the younger generation, and hoped they would not repeat the history.

* * * *

Most history has been written "from above", from the perspective of the powerful, privileged few. In re-writing history "from below", oral history can create a more accurate and authentic picture of the past. It can give back to people a sense of the historical significance of their own lives and make the practice of history more exciting and available to all (Humphries, 1984:x).

The old villager's memorable sentence reminded me of a Chinese phrase, '*gu wei jin yong*'. '*Yong*' can be translated as 'use' or 'consume' in English. '*Gu wei jin yong*' means make the past serve the present, or use the past for the present purpose. This phrase tells us something about the relation between the past and the present. As Fernand Braudel (1977) points out, there has never been a total break and an absolute discontinuity between the past and the present. Indeed, the past experiences continue into the present and add to it. In addition, "*gu wei jin yong*" also tells us the function of history that it is fundamental to the fabric of everyday life, which "help to give us our sense of identity, telling us who we are, where we are from and where we are going" (Jordan & Weedon, 1995). This phrase points out another important aspect that historical knowledge is a cultural product which can be used and consumed by the people. So history is never natural and given, nor does it reflect the fact of the past. It is always selected and produced for the specific interests of the present. In Weedon's word, "whether public or personal, history is always an interpretation of the past,

constructed in the present on the basis of a selective range of source materials” (Jordan and Weedon, 1995:117). But ‘who’ produces historical knowledge, and ‘who’ validates it for general consumption is the other important question which is connected with power relations and interests.

Mao’s death symbolized the end of the first ‘dynasty’ of the Chinese Communist state. How to understand and make judgments of this phase of history is still controversial. As Weedon says, dominant narratives of history always tend to naturalize the social relations of the present by showing how they have evolved naturally out of the past (Jordan and Weedon, 1995). To the Communist state, for maintaining its power, the state apparatus should interpret this phase in an ‘appropriate’ way. Firstly, it is necessary to negate the past for the sake of legitimating the rule of Deng’s new government; besides, *Si Ren Bang* (the Gang of Four), as scapegoat, must to be condemned as the “sinners of history” (*lishi zuiren*). In mainland China, there were many historical studies published after Mao’s death, but the focus was on the political struggle among the leaders at the central level (e.g. Gao & Yan, 1986; Cong, 1989; Lin, Fan & Zhang, 1989; Wang, 1989). In the mainland, the interpretation of history still could not go beyond the official version. The socialist state still controls the production of historical knowledge.

There were also some studies, conducted by local and foreign scholars, about the life of the youth and the Red guard (*hong wei bin*) in Mao’s China (e.g. Zhao, 1994; Liang, 1988; Yang etc. 1992; Bernstein, 1977). They provided the broad picture of the life of the young Chinese urban citizens in this chaotic period. Recently, more and more ethnographic accounts of peasant life in Mao’s era have been written (e.g. Potter and Potter, 1990; Chan, Madsen & Unger, 1992; Siu, 1989; Whyte & Parish, 1978; Mosher, 1983). There are also some scholars who started to understand Mao’s China through the views of the local people (e.g. Pickowicz, 1994). Their descriptions provide some points of comparison and their writings also contribute a lot in the reconstruction of the history of Mao’s China at local levels.

Living in the village, I noticed that talking about Mao’s era was an important part in the villagers’ everyday discourse. They recollected how the land reform transformed the rural society via destroying the traditional organizations and power structures, and redefining the social and economic relationship through the

redistribution of land. They also expressed how class-struggle campaigns and rigid class labels divided the community and hurt the *ganqing* and *guanxi* among the villagers. They still clearly remembered the economic disasters in collectivization, and told how they struggled for survivals by using different kinds of strategies. They also made comments on village cadres who derived authority from their ability to monopolize resource distribution and to influence the life of peasants. They often compared the present government in the reform era with the Mao's government which fulfilled its *zeren* of provision of minimal protections to them, such as provision of education, medical services, basic grain and other social security. The information they provided was so fragmented, and sometimes contradictory. On one occasion, they praised Mao's government; on another occasion, they condemned it. The contradictions in their discourse provoked my interest to dig in-depth to disclose the underlying meaning of their historical narratives -- What was life like for them in the last decades? What were their personal feelings? Why did the villagers configure the Communist government like that? How to make sense of their contradictory discourse? How did the villagers think and remember in terms of changing relationship between the state/cadres and peasants? How did the villagers' memory of the Maoist past serve in the formation of their perceptions of the state and cadres at present? Some of these questions I will try to answer in this chapter and some will be discussed in coming chapters.

In this chapter, from their everyday narratives, I mainly wished to get a glimpse into the lives of my relatives, and to take myself back to those past times, and to get the feel of what they were like. This is a history constructed by the collective memory from below. It is their own history full of their feeling, which embodies their hopes and disappointments, joy and bitterness, pleasures and fears, praise and disapprobation, and most important of all, their personal deep feelings and their impression of the world they live in at present. I try to integrate it under four topics based on the fragmented narration by villagers: 1) the period of fear; 2) the period of hunger; 3) the period of chaos; 4) praise for Mao's China.

3.1. *The Period of Fear*

'Unless the resistance of the exploiters is crushed, the victory of the revolution can not be consolidated.'

The above slogan was painted during land reform (*tugai*) after the triumph of the CCP. In villagers' daily chatting, I found that land reform was one of the periods the old villagers still had a clear memory of. Every time I mentioned the land reform, the feeling of fear was palpable.

About one year after Lin Biao's triumphant march southward in 1949 into Guangdong Province, the villagers realized that the Nationalist Party had been defeated by the Communist Party. It was said that the 'old China' had gone and the 'new China' had come. "Old China" (*jiu zhongguo*) or "old society" (*jiu shehui*) was signified as the one which was full of exploitation and inequality. As Cohen accurately states, the domination of a new regime established in 1949 rested not just on coercion, but also on cultural domination. For legitimizing the new regime, the Communist government had to establish the "regime of truth" through creating the rejectable others and inventing and constructing the powerless peasantry. The aim was to obtain consent from below and support from the masses. As Cohen points out:

... the characteristics of the old society have to be formulated in sufficiently convincing detail that they come to form a meaningful negative image assimilated into the consciousness and cultural outlook of the ordinary person. At the same time, the assertion that there is now a new society must be backed by cultural innovations that take firm and positive hold among the masses (Cohen, 1993:152).

People in "old China", especially the rural population, in official or academic discourse, were described as living in "deep water and scorching fire", i.e. an abyss of suffering (*shui shen huo re*). "They were no longer to be blamed for China's weakness, but to be pitied as victims of soluble oppression" (Cohen, 1993). The mission of the CCP was to save the powerless people from suppression and exploitation of 'three big mountains' (*san zuo da shan*) -- imperialism, feudalism, and bureaucratic capitalism. For the intellectual or political elite, the traditional cultural practices in rural society, e.g. lineage and kinship, ancestral worship, and religion, were also redefined as feudalism, and as major obstacles to national development and

salvation, which had to be rejected. In short, the peasants were also constructed as a culturally distinct and alien "other" -- passive, helpless, unenlightened, superstitious, ignorant, and inert.¹ So they were in need of education and cultural reform. For improvement in their circumstance, they were totally dependent on the leadership and efforts of rational and informed outsiders. Mao writes:

The gods? Worship them by all means. But if you had only Lord Guan and the Goddess of Mercy and no peasant association, could you have overthrown the local tyrants and evil gentry? The gods and goddesses are indeed miserable objects. You have to worshipped them for centuries, and they have not overthrown a single one of the local tyrants and or evil gentry for you! Now you want to have your rent reduced. Let me ask how will you go about it? Will you believe in the gods or in the peasant association? (Mao, 1972)

Without the efforts of the Chinese Communist Party, without the Chinese Communists as the mainstay of the Chinese people, China can never achieve independence and liberation, or industrialization and the modernization of her agriculture (Mao, 1967).

The Chinese Communist Party is the core of leadership of the whole Chinese people. Without this core, the cause of socialism cannot be victorious (Mao, 1967).

These quotations are examples of how the traditional culture was negated, and how the new regime was legitimized and morally confirmed.

Besides religion, the old economic system, represented into exploitative class relations and class polarization, also had to be eliminated. So after the Liberation of 1949, the CCP moved immediately to destroy the socio-economic basis and production relation of rural society by redistributing the lineage's corporate lands. The CCP also put much effort in deconstructing the moral basis of the lineage and transforming the traditional pattern of *guanxi* to a universalistic morality under the name of "comradeship". This transformation of personal relations was achieved through a combination of intimidation (e.g. political campaigns) and the promotion of

¹. Cohen states that many of the intellectuals were hostile to village popular culture like religion; they encouraged the destruction or conversion of local temples and shrines. They inclined toward the reconstruction of rural Chinese society and its reintegration into a renewed national cultural framework (1993). Duara (1995) in his new book *Rescuing History from the State* also explores and exemplifies how the intellectuals and reformers urged a break with the past, employing the "end of history" rhetoric in their campaign to destroy a world of popular religion which they condemned as superstitious and backward.

a socialist economy (from land reform to collectivization) that diminished the importance of personal connections (Vogel, 1965; Yan, 1996; Yang, 1995). How the land reform worked in Ku Village was told by the old villagers, e.g. Uncle Bi, Uncle Si and Aunt Shu-feng, who at that time were around twenty years old.

One day in 1950 there was a team of outsiders coming to Ku Village. Someone told the Ku villagers that they were the 'work team' (*gong zuo dui*) sent by the Communist government. They came to organize the Farmer Association (*nong hui*) and carried out the land reform in the village.² The members of the work team lived with the poorest villagers' in order to obtain the information about the class structure in Ku Village. This was in accordance with Mao's policy of "relying on poor peasants, uniting middle peasants, separately eliminating the exploitative feudal system step by step, and then developing agricultural production" (*yikao pingnong, tuanjie zhongnong, you buzou de, you fenbie de xiaomie fengjian zhidu, fazhan nongye shengchan*).³ They had the same meals and slept on the same beds with the poor villagers to earn the trust from them. They wanted to know how many landlords, rich peasants, business men and former Nationalist officials there were in Ku Village. At first the villagers did not dare to talk to outsiders -- the 'work team' cadres. After living with cadres for a period, and after the day-to-day, heart-to-heart talks with them, the villagers thought that the members of work team were nice and reliable. They began to trust the 'work team' cadres.

Then the cadres tried to mobilize them to join into the Farmer Association and to convince them to attack the landlords. They persuaded the poor villagers to fight against the landlords and divide the land by telling them that they would become the owners of society, which gave the villagers hope for a better future. Initially, most of the villagers did not want to attack the landlords and the rich peasants because they

² .On 28th of June 1950, the People's Central Government Committee discussed and passed the *Law of Land Reform of People's Republic of China* (*zhonghua renmin gongheguo tudi gaigefa*). On 30th of June, Mao ordered the formal implementation of the law. According to the Law, the aim of the land reform was to "abolish the exploitative feudal landlord ownership of land, and implement the peasant ownership of land, in order to emancipate the rural manpower, development agriculture production and open the way for the industrialization of new China."

³ . Readers interested in the policy of CCP can see *Zhongguo gongchandang lishi dashiji* (*The Chronicle of Events of CCP History*) 1989, edited by the Office of CCP History or *Jianguo yilai zhongyao wenxian xuanbian* (*Selections of the Important Documents since the Establishment of the Nation*) 1992, edited by Office of CCP Document Studies.

knew that it would hurt the *guanxi* (personal relationship) and *ganqing* (affection) between the Ku villagers. "We are brothers and sisters. There is no reason to attack one of us (*ziji ren*)," the villagers often said.

To solve this problem, the work team cadres had to recruit and train a reliable group. They chose the marginal villagers as their targets group to break the solidarity of lineage. Uncle Bi was one of the targets because he was an adopted heir (*linyang*) in Ku Village. His family had been ritually humiliated or looked down on when he was adopted into the lineage. Aunt Shu-feng was also chosen as one of the leaders in the coming land reform campaign because she was labeled as a 'suppressed woman' in 'old society'. She was sold to Ku Village as one's wife and her husband left her in order to marry another woman. Both of them, at the time were in their twenties, became the activists in land reform. Uncle Bi, Aunt Shu-feng and other poor villagers became the 'back-bone element' (*gugan fenzi*) and enthusiastically assisted the work team cadres in collecting information about individual households and land distribution. But some other villagers like Uncle Si were very indifferent to this movement. He said he only followed the masses (*sui dazhong*).

To the villagers, land reform was a terrible experience. When the land reform began, the soldiers of the Liberation Army (*jiefangjun*) were sent with guns to the villages to assist the work team for organizing the land reform. The rich peasants, landlords, the old gentry, the former Nationalist officials and *baozhang* (Nationalist security personnel) were arrested. Their property -- such as big house, money, jewelry, rice, fishponds, orchards, farm animals, farm tools, and land -- were all expropriated. The ancestral hall was also confiscated by the Farmer Association.

Then the "mass struggle meeting" (*qun zhong pidou dahui*) was organized by the work team to attack the landlords and "bad elements" in front of the villagers.⁴ It aimed to raise the class consciousness of the villagers by helping them recognize the exploitative nature of the pre-Liberation social order. The mass meeting was held in the ancestral hall. During the mass meeting, the landlords knelt on the ground and bowed their heads. The poorest villagers were invited by the work team cadres to expose their crimes. They were also mobilized to burn the landlord's land deeds and

⁴ . The mass struggle meeting seems to be similar to other scholars' accounts, e.g. Potter & Potter (1990); Hinton (1996); Vogel (1971); Schurmann (1968).

shout slogans led by the work teams. In the meeting, nephews spoke out against uncles, and members of same lineage branch spoke out against their close kinsmen. At the time, "lineage branch membership did not matter anymore."

If the "landlords" did not admit their guilt, they would be beaten by the work team members or some angry masses. After finishing the meeting in individual villages, several villages would join together to have another mass meeting. The landlord and "bad elements" were attacked in the meeting. Then the villagers from other villages were grouped together at the township level to suppress the counter-revolutionary elements (*zhenya fangeming*). The old villagers said no one was able to control the anger of the masses when their emotions were stirred up. At the end of the meeting, many landlords' heads were "broken and bleeding" (*toupo xueliu*) and their knees festered. The campaign was maintained for about six months. Day to day and night to night, the masses meeting never stopped. Some landlord's family members could not bear such treatment. They committed suicide: some threw themselves into the river and some hanged themselves.

In many villagers' minds, they knew that this was not the thing they wanted. They really did not want to participate in mass meetings, but for self-protection, they could only showed the same political gestures as others. When Aunt Mei-zhen recalled the land reform, her heart still fluttered with fear.

The mass struggle meetings were very fierce. Every time I was scared to death. They were so miserable. Nobody dared to be fair and help them. They were our relatives. We really sympathized with them.

In many villagers' minds, they also clearly knew that most of the landlords and rich peasants were not as bad as the official media described. Most of the landlords did not own very extensive land holdings as government mentioned. Uncle Si said:

Honestly speaking, during land reform, many innocent people were wronged. Many landlords owned only small pieces of land and had to work most of their lands themselves with the aid of hired helpers. They worked like other peasants. Some were labeled as the exploiting class since they employed one or two servant girls. You know, they employed the servant only because there was no one could take care the elders. Their life were also hard and they had similar meals with other villagers. Some were counted as landlords only because their parents or their grandparents were landlords, but their family had gone bankrupt in their generation and they had no more land in their hands

now. But the work team cadres said that they were still landlord households, but were bankrupt landlords (*pochan dizhu*). Funny! Our *Gongchandang* was very good at naming. Some were named only because they had worked for Nationalist government. Some landlords had many lands and big houses only because of their hard work. I really did not understand what they did wrong.

.....

Some villagers took advantage of land reform to make reprisals based on personal resentment. Because my father lived in Indonesia, they said he was capitalist and planned to label me as one of the "black five categories" (*hei wulei*). They were very ignorant. They simply thought all the overseas Chinese were capitalists and had much money. I told them that my father only worked for other people and was also exploited by others. They didn't believe me. But as my brother was a Communist party member and official in Shantou, they didn't dare to bother me.

Although many villagers knew that most landlords were unjustly treated, under the threat of a gun (*qiang gan zi*), they did not dare to stand out and defend the landlords. Most of them were full of discontent. Using their language, for self-safety they were "forced to keep their resentment to themselves" (*gannu er bugan yan*). The land reform had hurt the *guanxi* and *ganqing* among the villagers. Even today, some villagers still remember how other villagers treated their family in Mao's era, and they said that their *ganqing* with Ku Village had been cut off.

According to the reports from other Chinese rural areas, there were some peasants who resisted land reform. At the time, the 'work team' in Ku Village also faced some resistance. The landlord families did not passively hand over their property and power to the Farmers Association. Some landlord households tried to corrupt the work team cadres. Some cadres accepted the corruption and did not report the name of the landlord to the government. Some also organized and armed themselves in order to fight against the work team. Aunt Shu-feng recalled:

The government ordered the work team to finish the land reform within three months. Any one who accepted the corruption of the landlords' households would be seriously punished by the government. So we did not dare to accept the gift from the landlord although sometimes we really loved their gifts. The work was very hard. It was not a joke. Some landlords also had guns. In the evening, we did not dare walk alone outside the village.

The radicalism of land reform reflects that the state did not have control over the action of local cadres. In the state documents, the government clearly stated that cadres could not use coercive methods, such as beating, killing, and corporal punishment, to implement the land reform, but violence and coercion was prevalent in land reform. In fact, on 1st, December 1949, the Communist government had passed a document entitled "*Instruction on the Question of Checking Village Cadres' Unhealthy Tendencies of Working Attitude*" for checking coercion and ceasing the revolutionary terror, but the radical behaviour of some local cadres still existed. In 1950, a new land law was also formulated to stop the disruption of the villagers in the name of class war, as well as to guarantee the production and completion of harvest (Schurmann, 1968:434-437).

However, according to Uncle Bi, the new land laws and policies were not really adopted by the local cadres. The old policy of classification was still carried on and the rich peasants and landlord households were continuously mistreated. At the time, the social position of the rural population was also defined. Each family was assigned to one of the rural classes ranging from landlords to poor landless labourers. Those villagers who prior to the land reform had no land and were employed by others were labeled as lower peasants. Lower peasants were subdivided into poor peasants (*pingnong*) and farm labourers (*gunong*). The villagers who had just enough land to support their family were labeled as 'middle peasants' in which the category was subdivided into upper-middle, middle, and lower-middle. The lower-middle were those who had owned some land or very little land but had to supplement their life by renting land as tenants or doing some field labour for richer households. The middle-middle were those who had enough land for themselves and had no extra land to rent to others. The upper-middle (*funong*) were those who had little more extra land to rent to other farmer households. The poor and lower-middle peasants belonged to the 'red class' and were qualified to join in the Farmer Association. In addition, there were others kinds of lower-middle peasants, e.g. workers (*gongren*), small peddlers (*xiaofan*), handicraft workers (*shougongyi zhe*) and so on.

The landlords were those who depended on collecting rent for supporting their family and were capable of employing labour for their field work. They were also capable of employing servant girls. The landlords was also subdivided into current

landlords, overseas landlords (the landlords lived in overseas and authorizes their relatives to collect the rent for them), bankrupt landlords and bureaucratic landlords (such as the heads of township who depended on their position to support their family). The rich peasants and landlords officially belonged to 'bad' or 'black' untrustworthy classes and were disqualified to join the Farmer Association. In Ku Village, there were five landlord and rich peasants households. Apart from the landlords and rich peasants, there were other different kinds of villagers who belonged to the bad category. They were former heads of the village, local tyrants, evil gentry, religious practitioners (*mixin zhiyezhe*) business men, soldiers of Nationalist party, and the former bureaucrats of the Nationalist government (*jiuguanliao*). The class labeling reconstituted the class structure in rural China, which determined how much political capital the villagers owned. This political capital could translated into power and could influence the life-chance of the villagers. Brother Wen faced bad treatment because of a bad class label. He said:

Because my father was staff for the *Guomindang*, our family was labeled as "five black categories". Our labour was only counted in half; even though we worked harder than others, we still bore hunger. We could not raise our heads everyday, especially when the political campaign came.

After making clear the identity and class label, the Chinese Communist government began to keep their promise to Chinese peasants: the division of land. Uncle Bi was one of the leaders who participated in decision making of division of land. He explained to me how they divided the land.

After making clear the quantity and quality of the land in our village, we divided the land according to the individual households' information. We divided the land on the table (*zhuoshang fenzhuang*). It was quite complicated. Apart from the number of households, we had to consider the quality of the land. The head of each household was called to recognize the location of their land. If they did not agree with our arrangement, they could make a complaint. But at that time, most villagers learned the lesson to keep silence. There were some lands far away from our village, some were on the hillock, some were on the other side of the mountain. Who would get these land? Certainly the 'bad elements'. Landlords also had land because they had to feed themselves. They had to work and try the taste of poor people. Anyway, the worst land was given to the landlords.

The Communist government not only divided the land to the poor peasants, they also divided the other property of the landlords, such as clothes, money, rice and so on. That was 1952. At the time, the poor villagers, who occupied a large proportion of the rural population, basically welcomed the land distribution as it served for their interest. Uncle Si often adopted Confucius' words "*ren bu weiji, tianzhu dimie*" (unless a man looks out for himself, Heaven and Earth will him) to justify why nobody came out to stand for the landlord and rich peasants.

One year later, the government sent another work team to see whether the land was really divided to the peasant households. At the same time, the work team made estimations on the yield of the village and set the quota of grain production based on the land area and quality. The estimation was based on the report of the village leaders. As Uncle Bi told me, the villagers leaders did not always follow the state policies. When the policy confronted the interests of the village, they would resist by using a safe strategy. He said:

We tried to lower the quota of grain delivered to the state. You know, the land was divided into different classes. The first class land had to submit more grain. The second class land would submit less grain. So we tried our best to define more land as second class. We knew most of the records had been destroyed in mass struggle meetings, They had to believe what we said. We also behaved very honestly and cooperatively. So they had no reason to doubt our report.

After the division of the land, 1953 was the year of establishing the 'democratic' regime (*minzhu zhengquan*). At the local level, the township government was formally set up. The election of the head of the village and township, and other leaders such as the head of people's militia and so on were carried out under the guidelines of the upper government. After the governments at different levels were set up, the effort of the Chinese Communist state shifted to the development of agricultural production.

3.2. The Period of Hunger

"Nashihou shifengku, henduo ren e si," an old woman said.

(At the time, the situation was at the worst, most died in hunger.)

One of the most remarkable things in Mao's era was the great famine which occurred in China between 1958 and 1962. Inside China, people rarely mentioned or discussed the famine. In the official version, this was merely three years of natural disasters. For over twenty years, much of the story remained in secrecy and people were not sure whether it had been taken place and how serious the situation was until 1982 when the Chinese government released the statistical data about the total population and vital rate between 1959-1961. After several years, the Chinese government also published the rest of the data from 1953 onward. The demographers made a startling estimation that at least 30 million people had starved to death in this great famine (e.g. Aird, 1982 & 1984; Ashton etc. 1984; Banister, 1985; Liu, 1985). But as Kane pointed out, "(China's) Population statistics were for many years considered controversial by those outside China: they appeared in fragmentary form and demographers were often doubtful about their validity" (1988: 2). So it was still difficult to obtain an accurate figure of the death in this secret famine. Some scholars have tried to reconstruct the picture of this phase of history via personal accounts and anthropological studies (e.g. Becker, 1996; Kane, 1988). It has become more and more clear that the greatest suffering in Mao's China was the famine, and the peasants were the chief victims. Ku villagers shared the similar experience with other rural Chinese without escaping by sheer luck. For those who were in the village at the time, the horror of the hunger was indelibly imprinted on their memories. Even after three decades, their memories were still fresh.

After establishing the new regime, the Chinese Communist government began to develop their production. For the CCP led by Mao, China could not wait for mechanization and the creation of a modernized and scientific agriculture before they collectivized. So the second step was to eliminate private ownership and move forward to a new egalitarian and collectivist form of rural society (see Hilton, 1966; Schurmann, 1966; Selden, 1978; Shue, 1988).⁵ In 1954, Kus experienced another transformation. Mutual aid group (*huzhuzu*) was the initial structural form for the implementation of collectivization. The Chinese Communist government organized

⁵. There was a debate over the agricultural policy among the orthodox Marxists and Maoist Marxists. People wanting to know the debate in detail can see Yi-po Bo (1993) *Ruogan zhongda juece yu shijian de huigu* [The review of several important policy making and events]. Zhonggong zhongyang dangxiao publishing.

the villagers' production in the form of mutual-aid team. Initially, the Communist government encouraged several households to join together in production in order to utilize the resources and mutually help each other. For example, if your family did not have farm cattle, you could join with the one that did. If your family lacked of farm implements, you could join with one that did. Moreover, they could also learn farming techniques from each other. The villagers accepted this idea of cooperative production because they also practiced this kind of cooperation in everyday production and in the harvest period before 'liberation'.⁶ But the landlord households were discriminated against by the villagers. Xingu, an old woman in Ku Village, recalled:

At the time, the villagers liked to join with the households having good *guanxi*, or join with close relatives. But most of the villagers weren't willing to join with the landlord households. On the one hand, because we were afraid of being involved into trouble (*bei lian lei*); on the other hand, because the landlord's land was far away from the village. We had to waste a lot of time in traveling. In the end, besides the very close relatives, the landlord households joined themselves together.

However, the Communist government found that the mutual-aid team was too small and it did not alter the structural primacy of the household as the basic unit for agricultural planning and production. So the CCP government then ordered several mutual-aid teams to join together to become a big mutual-aid team (*lianzu*). The number of people in each mutual-aid team was about 100 after joining. The Communist government still was not satisfied with the scale of production. In December of 1953, the Regulation of "Unified purchasing and marketing of grain" was issued to prohibit individual exchanges of grain. It established compulsory sale to the state of specified amounts of grain at low state prices. In 1955, the Communist government began to organize the early stage collective, and then the collective of the higher stage. And the 'three-fixed policy' -- unified purchase quotas (*tonggou*), unified sale quota (*tongxiao*) and unified production quotas (*dingchan*) -- were carried

⁶. As I mentioned in last chapter, in the past, kinsmen, friends, and close patrilineal relatives had helped one another during the busier parts of the agricultural year. To the CCP government, mutual aid groups were not their ideal forms of organization of production since it could not go beyond the pre-existing cultural patterns. So that's why the CCP moved quickly to the form of the Commune.

out in the village.⁷ The government also required the villagers to sell their surplus grain. Every village had its quota according to amount of arable land. This was the beginning of hunger for the villagers. Uncle Si said:

How could we have surplus at that time? This was the compulsory surplus grain purchasing. You know, the households which had many children were unable to have surplus. I was working in the secondary school in town. I had to save my food and sent it to my family. You say, was it possible that we had surplus? The *gongliang* (agriculture tax) and *yuliang* (surplus grain purchasing) almost took our lives!

In 1958, the introduction of the Commune system basically ended the collectivization movement, and the commune system founded the basic political and economic administrative system prior to rural reform in the early 1980s.

According to Uncle Bi, the Commune system was not suddenly introduced to every village. The government made experiments in several places. After getting the report of a successful Commune system, it was carried out to every village. At first, the Chinese Communist government encouraged the peasants to freely join the communes. In fact, the Ku villagers could not refuse to join the collective because the cadres would visit their homes and do ideological work (*zuo sixiang gongzuo*) with them everyday in order to straighten out their thinking. Uncle Ba shared this experience with me:

If you didn't join the commune, they (cadres) would come to your home everyday. Very annoying! They criticized you for lagging behind in understanding and persuaded you to throw off the weight on your mind (*sixiang baofu*). I was afraid of being criticized in the mass meeting. In the end, I joined it.

The activists who had joined the collective in the village would also isolate and discriminate against those who refused to join and criticized their 'backward political consciousness' (*luohou zhengzhi juewu*). In the villagers' recalling, I know that some villagers were not willing to join collective production. They did not want to give

⁷. It aimed to intensify its exploitation and control of the rural society. To extract more from rural society, agricultural output had to increase. Land reform had given the peasants land, but did not lead to an improvement of the overall agricultural situation, and government could not easily extract the surplus from village. This was because the peasant producers still controlled their means of production, production process, and the allocation of grain between on-farm consumption and market sales. For economic considerations, the communist government speeded up the pace of cooperation. Mao believed that collectivization seemed to be the answer to the problem of increased need for agricultural surplus.

back their land and turn over their private property, such as production tool and so forth to the collective, especially the relatively rich households. For peasants, land was very important. They hated any government who occupied their land. From land reform to collectivization, the Chinese Communist party began losing her trustworthiness. Some villagers even thought that they were cheated by the Chinese Communist Party. Granduncle Wen-de was angry when I talked with him about the commune system. He originally stayed in Singapore before 1949. When he heard that land was divided by Communist Party, he returned to Ku Village. But the land reform only made him happy for a short period. He said:

Don't believe the Communist Party. They often change their policy. I think I wouldn't have come back to Xiaohuang if they didn't tell me lies.

I didn't know what happened. The government always said the new policy was good for us. Ah! No matter good or bad, they have guns, we have no choice.

A commune was divided into a number of production bridges, which were further sub-divided into production teams. In Meixian, there were 32 communes. Ku Village belonged to Songnan commune, which included 13 production bridges. Ku Village was divided into two production teams under the jurisdiction of Xiaohuang bridge. The production team was the basic production and accounting unit, which owned the land and was responsible for all the decisions involving distributing the income generated by the production team. In theory, the overall planning of production was subject to certain guidelines such as quotas for grain and basic commodities which must be sold to the state at fixed prices, and the quotas for other agricultural products such as fruit, vegetables, fish or meat. In practice, Brother Ming, a former vice brigade party secretary, said that the production team had some flexibility or discretion in meeting different quotas or exceeding certain quotas. The production team had substantial autonomy in making investment decisions involving its own manpower and organizing the production and resource arrangements.

The production brigade coordinated the annual production plans of the teams on the basis of quotas assigned by the commune, it also allocated certain agricultural inputs such as fertilizer and pumps. But its more important functions were to undertake investment and development activities. In addition, it provided certain

social services like primary schools, health clinics, and entertainment activities. Brigades also organized credit cooperatives and militia units. The brigade also served as the seat of the party branch and was the lowest level at which the party operated through direct contact with the rural population. At the time, Uncle Bi had become the brigade party secretary.

The commune functioned to coordinate, supervise and guide all the activities of production teams and production brigades. It undertook larger projects requiring a considerable workforce or substantial financial resources, such as large water conservancy projects or rural roads and industrial units. In addition, it provided supplementary social services, particularly secondary education and hospital facilities. The main political function of the commune was to supervise and implement the political and administrative policies of the state and to strengthen the ideological and political basis of the rural society. The communes performed certain other functions, such as military training, control of the movement of population and the collection of state taxes. While in its political role the commune was responsible for implementing government policy at the local level, its economic role was to provide leadership guidance, and assistance for agricultural and rural development through production planning, provision of essential inputs, the diversification of the rural economy and provision of certain social services. In short, the People's Commune was a composite unit of local government that encompassed the whole range of economic, social, administrative and political functions for the rural community.⁸

Under the commune system, all the peasants were organized into the collective agricultural organization. The collective replaced the family as the unit of production and accounting. Their life was different from before since they no longer chose which crops to plant, when to harvest, who should work where, how much to spend on fertilizer, what was the price of the products and so on. Everything was planned under the control of the government. The lifestyle was standardized and no one could choose their livelihood. Uncle Bi recalled:

⁸. My account of the content and function of commune system is brief; interested readers may see Aziz's *Rural Development: Learning from China, 1978*.

Everything was militarized. We had collective action, collective production, collective cooking.... When the gong was beaten, the villagers had to meet at the designated place and then work together under the direction of the leader. The elder one was responsible for cooking. When the gong was beaten again, all the people stopped and had the meal together.

In 1960, the Commune system was pushed to extremes. That was the beginning of *Daguofan* (food prepared in a large canteen caldron) -- The Great Leap. The villagers ate in the public canteen, just like everyone else. Every commune had a common dining hall with several cooks. Everyone could eat as much as they wanted each day. Unfortunately, the initial euphoria did not last long, and big problems began to emerge. To the villagers, it was a big joke of the Chinese Communist party. In their memory, HUNGER is the label they gave to this period. Followings are the memories of different villagers.

Uncle Si:

1960 was the most miserable year. At first, we all ate in the public canteen. There was lots of rice and meat. We were very full everyday. The leftovers were fed to the pigs. Nobody expected that those good days went on for just one month. After one month, we began to eat congee. Congee was free to eat, but rice was rationed. Everyone had a bowl of rice per meal. I remember that eight people sat around one table. Soon after everyone only had one rice cake per meal. And after that we began to eat chaff cake. The situation became worse and worse. Every labourer had only a bowl of vegetable soup and a piece of chaff cake. The children had no ration because they were not labourers. Everyday when I went home, I found that the children were very hungry. So I only drank the soup and gave the chaff cake to my children. We had no rice because all had been collected by the collective. Everyone had to bear the hunger. I think you can't believe that we ate roots of papaya tree, heads of bananas, and anything we could eat. It was really miserable! My brother helped our family a lot. He worked in Boluo township. He saved some grain coupons⁹ and sent them to us. These grain coupons saved our family's life. I feel thankful to my brother even nowadays. You know, at the time, many villagers became dropsy, and many died in hunger.

⁹. People can only buy the grain with the grain coupon at the state's grain station.

Aunt Shufeng:

The Daguofan could only be maintained for 39 days. I remember there was a very good Chinese New Year. We had pork, fish, radish cake and other food in the public canteen. But the good days were no longer. The eating quota was set quickly because there was not enough food storage. In 1960, it was miserable! Everyone was in hunger.

We had not enough food [rice] to eat. So most villagers had to eat banana leaves, grass roots, and even chaff and wild herbs now eaten by pigs. Many villagers' belly became bloated.

I almost died. I didn't die because I was clever enough. I didn't totally hand my grain to the collective because I always doubted whether the Daguofan was workable. So I hid some rice under my bed. In the mid-night, I cooked some rice to heal my stomach. I didn't dare to let anyone know. The honest villagers who handed all the grain to the collective were really foolish. They were almost killed by hunger.

Uncle Bi:

I was the party secretary of brigade. I felt very upset when the situation became so bad...

At first, not all the communes implemented the system of Daguofan. The government only made the experiment in several villages. The villages sent several representatives to communes as test samples. Each representative had a half jin of rice. But the representative could eat only two to three liang, then the government set two liang per meal for each person. After the experiment, the commune ordered the villagers to hand over all their grain to the collective. But I knew some clever ones hid some grain. At first, everyone could eat as much as they wanted. Then everyone could only have a bowl of rice. And then the public canteen only provided the congee. Our rice in public storage was finished within only one month. It was quite ironic! We began to buy the grain from outside villages -- either rice or other food grain -- because everywhere there was a shortage of grain. 1960 was the worst year because there were serious floods and insect pests. Misfortunes never come singly (huo bu dan xing). Russia forced us to repay the debt. It made the bad

situation much worse. Famines were everywhere. As I knew, most villagers in other village left their home and begged in cities. In our village, many people fell into serious sickness. There were 80 people who died in our brigade. Five were our villagers. Many people in our village became dropsy because they drank too much water. No other choices, when they felt hungry, they could only drink water... Every villager was in hunger, but they still had to work as long as before. They worked for several minutes, but had a rest for an hour. No one had any energy. We often saw the villagers suddenly fallen down...

Although we lacked grain, we still had to fulfill our quota to the state. At the time, there were many 'blind orders from above'. Because of pressures from above to show that the policies of the Great Leap Forward were producing extraordinarily successful results, the locals were required to report to the commune that they were producing 800 to 1,000 jin per mu per harvest. Crazy! I was also a farmer. Of course I knew it was impossible. At first, our brigade refused to follow what they required. We just reported 600 jin. You know, 600 jin was a lie, but we had been seriously criticized as luohou (backward). No alternative, I had to report 800 jin in the end. At the time, commune was competing against commune to show increased production so as to prove the success of the policy. What a pity! Pretense and lies caused this serious disaster.

.....

After the failure of the Great Leap, the system of *Daguofan* was canceled and the public canteen was closed. Every household cooked for themselves again. The unit of production returned to the production team. A ration system was also carried out. As Uncle Bi's wife joked,

...everything was rationed. For example, each person had only two chi coupons of cloth. We didn't understand how to make clothes with two chi of cloth, not even underwear. It's terribly funny!

The peasant households were still allowed to keep a little private garden plot (*ziliu di*) on which to grow vegetables and other crops such as bananas, sugarcane and peanuts for their own consumption. But it was still the collective's production. Under the ideology of "a grain must be taken as the key link in agriculture" (*yiliang weigan*), nobody could carry out sideline activities as all the people were required to cut off the

tail of capitalism (*ge ziben zhuyi weiba*). Anyone raising ducks, pigs and others would be labeled as walking on the road of capitalism (*zou ziben zuyi daolu*). When I mentioned about this, Uncle Si was still angry. He said:

At the time, no one had enough food to eat. I had five children. Depending only on the ration, it was impossible to live. So I decided to plant some sweet potatoes and sold them in the open market. But the leader of our team, I don't want to say who he is, didn't allow it and criticized me for walking on the road of capitalism.

Under the commune system, a clear distinction was always made between the cadres who ate 'state rice' (*chi guojia fan*) and those who ate 'collective rice' (*chi jiti fan*). All the commune cadres ate 'state rice'. But in the brigade, only some cadres ate state rice. The cadres who ate collective rice had to participate into daily production. At the team level, all cadres ate 'collective rice'. Their income was also counted into work points and was correlated to the collective income. However, regardless whether the cadres ate collective rice or state rice, to the villagers, their authority was appointed and paid for by the Communist government. The villagers often thought the village cadres in Ku Village did not really serve the village and protect their interests. To them, the village cadres were state agents who represented the state and implemented state policy. Although the village cadres came from the village, the villagers told me that they did not take care of the interests of the village, and the lineage relationship did not matter. The state interest always overrode that of kin and village. I heard several fellow villagers comment about the cadres as follows:

Kin? Relative? So what? They [local cadres] never take care of our interest. They only serve themselves.

Ah! Don't mention about these people. When they became bureaucrats, they forgot their kin.

They never took care of us. Kin and relative? What's important to them? They did not go to trouble for you. You were very lucky.

But the village cadres told me that they could not do anything at the moment. To them, although the managerial and distributive power was concentrated in their hand, there were limitations on their power, and they were also clients to the upper government. As cadres, if they did not follow the policy of the state, they would be suffer disaster (*zaoyang*). Uncle Bi expressed his powerlessness:

Ai! We had no alternative. I knew many villagers cursed us that we didn't take care of the village. How could we, at the high tide of the campaign? They were suffering; me too. I had done many things to save our village. But they didn't know.

They also complained that their opinion was difficult to pass along to those above, and the reality of the local situation was often ignored. The present village party secretary, Song-sheng, who was one of the brigade cadres, told me:

We have no choice. If we cannot fulfill the task and duties, we will be subject to sanctions and be criticized by the leader of the higher level. If we failed to meet quotas, we would lose face (*diulian*).

Song-sheng showed me an example of how the local government responded to national trends blindly. In the campaign of *Xue Da-zhai*, when the state advocated planting cotton, the commune compelled the brigade to follow the policy. But they argued that cotton planting was impossible in Ku Village because the climate and soil were not suitable for planting. But fixed quotas made resistance impossible because the local cadres heavily depended on the state for privilege and legitimacy. The team leaders depended on the brigade for his office and the right to distribute the goods available within the team, and thus ultimately for his power.¹⁰

After the failure of the Great Leap, the Chinese Communist government no longer advocated equal distribution, but the "distribution according to work" (*anlao fengpei*) and "the more you work, the more you get" (*duolao duode*). Villagers' daily incomes were calculated as working points (*gongfen*). The calculation of working points was different in the slack season (*nongxian*) and the busy season (*nongmang*). According to Brother Ming again, in the slack season, a villager who contributed labour to the collective could receive 8 working points. In busy times, a villager could receive 10 working points per day. Ten working points were equal to 0.4 jiao *renminbi*. Not all the villagers were able to earn the full work points because the labour was divided into full labour, semi-labour (elderly and young), and non-labour. In the collective, the grain, oil, vegetables and other rations were distributed to the peasant households. The amount of ration was based on the labour of that household. If the peasant household had more labour, their life might be better. On 15 of July

¹⁰. Oi in her book point out : "if the upper level decide to reduce agricultural inputs, cut the team budget, demand higher grain sales, and lower grain rations, the team leader, as a subordinate, has no choice but to carry out such directives" (Oi, 1989:145).

and 25 of November in every year, the collective distributed the grain to individual households based on how many working points they obtained. In theory, the villagers' excess working points can be exchanged to cash. But Aunt Shu-feng, Uncle Bi and Brother Ming witnessed that in fact only few villagers could earn many work points. Brother Ming told me that the cash value of work points was diverse in different brigades, which depended on the total production of that brigade. Some brigades' cash value of working points was even lower than 0.4 jiao. If the villagers' working points could not cover the cost of rations, they had to pay the collective. Another old villager, -- Uncle Qiang, told me that many villagers always owed money to the collective.

In formal and informal interviews, the villagers and local cadres (former and present) described that the local cadres as powerful in controlling the activities of the villagers in the collective agriculture. They called them "local emperors" (*tuhuangdi*). This was due to their ability to control the subsistence and livelihood of the peasants. After collectivization, participation in collective labour was the only means of obtaining grain. Although the illegal black market always existed, the supply was unstable and the price was higher. If the villagers exited from the collective, their subsistence would reach a crisis.

According to different villagers' recollections, every morning, through beating the gong, the team leader awakened the villagers. Then they met the villagers under a tree or at the village entrance. The day's work was assigned by the head of the team. Some transplanted rice; some sowed the seeds; and some looked after the farm cattle. Occasionally, the morning political lessons were carried out and the state policy was also passed to the peasants. Everyday after contributing the labour to collective, the villagers carried out some sideline activities on their private plot. The work-point value and difficulty was different in various tasks. In order to obtain the high work-point value and easy tasks, the villagers tried to keep a good personal relationship (*gaohao guanxi*) with the cadres by sending the small gifts, e.g. chicken and fish, in order to obtain the high work-point values and easy jobs. According to Brother Ming, some jobs, such as carrying the stones, cutting the tree and so on, were worth few work points and were both difficult and time-consuming. This job was often assigned to the ones they termed as 'mischievous elements' (*tiaopi fenzi*). In contrast,

some prestige jobs, such as tractor driving or herding the cattle, which required little energy but paid high working points, were often assigned to the ones who had good relations with the cadres. Brother Ming did not deny this fact. He said:

We often assigned the good job to our family members, or to the close relatives, or to those who had good relationships with us. It was just the way of the world (*renzhi changqing*). If you were me, you would also do that.

Songsheng also declared that they were powerful in the collective era:

In the collective era, when we said "yes", no villagers dared to say "no". It was because the villagers begged for everything from us.

I think "everything" included the grain, work distribution, private plots, welfare, sidelines and so on.

Apart from the power of work allocation, the local cadres also controlled the job opportunities outside agriculture. Sometimes the factories in cities would employ contract labor. The contract labour jobs in urban areas were particularly attractive because they provided the opportunity for peasants to move to the city even temporarily. Sometimes, the peasants would have the opportunity to become part of the permanent urban population if they could establish a good network in the city when they were working in contract jobs. The competition for these prestige jobs was keen as there was little job opportunity. Those villagers who had no personal relationship with the cadres would not be able to obtain the opportunity. The brigade leaders and team leaders played an important role in selecting the workers. The recommendation of the team leader was usually a precondition.

In addition, the village leaders allocated welfare as well as other collective resources. The "economically distressed households" (*kunan hu*) would be particularly dependent on the local leaders. They had to approach the team leader so often, tell him their problems and request a loan or subsidy. For instance, when they could not afford the education fee of their children, they would ask the leader to issue a certificate for the exemption from school fees. A villager, Uncle Qiang, told me that he "felt himself like a beggar" when he approached the cadres. For the education of his children, he could only beg for aid from the team leader. Officially, though the team leader needed higher approval before the loan could be granted, loan

applications never reached the higher levels for approval without the team leader's recommendation.

Furthermore, the local cadres also controlled the migration of villagers by means of the household registration system. In Mao's China, both urban and rural populations had no freedom of internal migration from one region to another. The people had to get the certificate (*zhengming*) of permission sealed by the local government. Because the chop was held in the hand of local cadres and the certificate was issued by them, in order to make things convenient, the villagers always tried their best to keep good relations with local cadres. Uncle Wu told me that he had to bring some gifts to cadres of the brigade leaders after he visited his brother in Shantou. The "chop" power of local cadres also influenced different aspects of peasant life such as marriage, birth and so on. The marriage and birth certificate were also sealed by the local cadres. Li-qing and Brother Ming's marriage had been reviewed by the brigade. Since Li-qing's family was labeled as "black five categories", the brigade warned Brother Ming to consider the marriage carefully as the marriage would influence Ming's prospects. But Ming insisted on marrying Li-qing. In the end, he had to resign his post in the brigade and joined the army.

In Mao's era, although the structural disadvantages constrained the political action of the villagers, their everyday life resistance persisted, but in a safe and hidden way. They clearly knew that open, organized and radical confrontation would bring a tragic outcome. So to them, everyday forms of resistance were the most significant way and safe technique for avoiding armed force and bloodshed, and minimizing their losses. It appeared to have mainly taken the forms of passive non-compliance, withdrawal of effort, slaughter of farm animals and so on.

In the collective production, the villagers often took small effort because the income was not positively related to how much effort they put out, but related to how much time they spent on the collective work. So the villagers often had a long rest in working while the cadres did not pay much attention to them. In summer, they often enjoyed the cool shade and chatted with other villagers under the trees. But under the surveillance of the team leader, they pretended to be working hard. This action influenced the production of agriculture, and to some extent reflected the discontent of

the villagers with the collective system. Uncle Xiang told me how they worked in collective production:

...we worked when the cadres were around, then we were relaxed when they went away. We made sure that we always looked like we were working hard when the cadres were there. So they had no excuse to deduct our working points.

Feigned sickness was rife in Ku Village. After the failure of the Great Leap Forward, the peasants households were allowed to keep a little piece of private plot. So everyday after contributing the labour to collective, the villagers carried out sideline activities on their private plot. The villagers who wanted extra time for sideline work often went to the team leader and asked for time off and left from their collective duties by saying "I am sick" (*you bing*). Generally, the team leader approved their request by 'opening one eye and closing the other'. Of course, the villagers would send gifts in return.

The villagers tried different ways to fight for survival in Mao's era. Pilfering grain was popular. Uncle Si told me that when the villagers who were responsible for carrying the grain to state grain station, they put some bricks or bottles into the grain. The staff in state grain stations would return the overweight grain to the villagers. Moreover, some villagers stole the grain at the public granary in the middle of the night.

The villagers would take chances to get revenge on the cadres via slandering the "unfairness" and "corruption" of the leader. During political campaigns, the villagers exposed the wrong things of the team leader and attacked the cadres in public meetings. According to the villagers, if they dared to adopt this defensive strategy, it was effective in protecting themselves and their families from discrimination by the cadres. But most peasants were afraid of the vengeance of the cadres because there were many opportunities for the cadres to take revenge such as assigning them heavy work.¹¹

¹¹. The situation was similar in Chen Village; the interviewee of Chen village stated: "Most of the masses were afraid. The cadres were like emperors: brigade emperors and team emperors. If you complained about them, they might want to take revenge, something very frightful. Because a peasant has no way of leaving a village. A cadre's revenge could take the form of assigning them heavy work for years to come" (Chan, Madsen & Unger, 1992:47-48).

The village cadres sometimes also colluded with the villagers to carry out resistance. Their positional advantage helped them to further their own interests and practice favouritism. Brother Ming told me that there were different strategies the local cadres employed to search for self-interest. For example, an accountant often counted more grain on his family's quota. The register staff often cheated in the working points register. The store keeper sometimes stole grain and fertilizer, and sold them in the black market.

In short, the Great Leap Forward disappointed the Ku villagers and the local cadres. It also discredited the legitimacy of the CCP, although the CCP tried to re-establish the faith of the Chinese through different political campaigns, e.g. the Four Cleanups movement. As Ku villagers drew the lessons from past experiences, in the political campaigns afterward, they knew how to play the game with the government and protect their own interests.

3.3. The Period of Chaos

Henduo zhengce women dou bu mingbai, dan gen dazhong, zongmeicuo, a former village cadre said.

(Most of the time I didn't understand the policy, but it would not be wrong to follow the masses.)

In 1964, there was another political campaign: the Four Cleanups campaign.¹² One day there was a team of cadres accompanying the brigade cadres who entered into Ku Village. The 'Four Cleanups' work team announced that firstly they came to clean up the politics; second to purify ideology; third, to purify the local party organization and the corrupt practices of local rural officials; fourth, to improve the working of the rural economy. As with the land reform, the first important task of the work team was to gain the trust and support from the masses -- good-class peasants. According to a member of Four Cleanups work team, Uncle Xi-xiu, they made every effort to practice the 'three together' (*san tong*) -- living together, eating together, and working together -- with the poor and lower-middle peasants. They often chose the

¹². For a detailed account of the Four Cleanups, see Chan, Madsen & Unger (1992) *Chen Village*.

poorest family to stay with, to show the villagers that they had no bureaucratic style of work (*guanliao zuofeng*). So they paid the family for everything they consumed. After the work team arrived in the village, they convened a mass meeting for all peasants except the four bad elements who were strictly excluded from all forms of political participation. In the meeting, the work team cadres announced the aim of the Four Cleanups and transmitted the document of the Central Committee and the talks of Chairman Mao. In the villagers' memories, there were many mass meetings in this campaign. In addition to the mass meetings, the work team also carried out many propaganda activities. Most of the wall slogans were painted during the 'Four Cleanups', through which the Ku villagers had learned how to assess which way the wind was blowing.

At the first stage of this campaign, the villagers kept silence because they had learned the lesson from the land reform and they were afraid that the village cadres would take revenge. The members of the work team tried to persuade the villagers to speak up by guaranteeing their protection in future from the cadres' revenge. Some villagers had learned the lessons from the previous campaigns. They did not want to have any troubles and refused to attack the village cadres. But by daily 'heart-to-heart' talking, the cadres again won the trust from some young villagers and gathered a picture of village affairs. Songsheng was one who began to get in step with the political platform through this campaign.

To re-empower the villager's faith in the Chinese Communist Party, one important purpose of this campaign was to stamp out corruption at the local level. The targets, at the team level, were often the team leaders, warehousemen, cashiers, accountants or other local village officials. All officials in the mass meeting were required to make a public self-examination. Aunt Shu-feng was a team leader at that time, who was attacked by someone in the mass meeting. She recalled:

The bridge cadres and us were assaulted in the Four Cleanups. Some young activists came out and brought a false charge against us. They said that I took advantage of my position to corrupt the public goods. They threatened to cut my hand off if I didn't confess. I thought I had displeased the villagers in the land reform. Nobody came out to defend me. At that moment, I knew I couldn't escape by this campaign. For survival, I took the self-criticism. Then I lost my position as a team leader. I thought it was good for me. You know, there were many political campaigns thereafter.

As a warehouseman, Uncle Si was also asked to make self-examination in a mass meeting. He was in charge of overseeing his team's granaries and the distribution of grain rations to all the team's households. It was relatively easy to appropriate a little extra rice for himself and his family and to weigh out slightly bigger portions to close friends and relatives. Although he told me in fact he had done so, he thought it was exceedingly common in China especially during the period of hunger. But he refused to tell the truth in the mass meeting because he knew honesty would only get him into trouble. As he was an honest person in the village, nobody came out to criticize him. But the bridge cadres still tried to find out this wrongdoing. Uncle Si recalled:

The Communist Party always bullies the weak and fears the strong (*qi shan pa e*). One day, brigade's cadres called me to the office. They asked me if I had stolen the state's lumber. I firmly said "no". They warned me that somebody had witnessed that I had done so. I still firmly said "I never did it". They asked me what I was doing on a certain day. I suddenly remembered that I went to collect the firewood with Wende on the hill. But everyone collected the firewood! Why did our collection suddenly become stealing the state's lumber? But if the Communist Party was out to condemn somebody, it could always trump up a charge. I thought the best I could do was to confess my 'wrong' action. Finally, I paid the fine. But nothing happened to Wende.

After the Four Cleanups, several brigade cadres and team cadres were replaced by the younger activists. In addition to "cleaning up the corrupt officials", "class struggle" was always a main theme in different campaigns. In the Four Cleanups campaign, the work team re-examined class identity in the village. Those upper middle peasants who were not defined as landlords had to be re-examined. Uncle Gong recalled how they resisted being defined as landlords class in the Four Cleanups.

Our grandfather was a teacher, belonging to free occupation; my father did business in Indonesia, belonging to overseas capitalist; my mother employed a servant girl. They said we belonged to the landlord class. But my older brother was employed by someone; my younger was a former guerrilla and became the member of the Chinese Communist Party. We asked the work team cadres if our class identity was the same as the head of household. They said 'yes'. My older brother was the head of household. He was exploited by the capital and he was working class, so of course we were also working class. They pointed out my father was an overseas capitalist. We argued that he didn't exploit Chinese. After re-examination, they found difficult to define our family as landlord class. It was very precarious. We were lucky to avoid this disaster.

Several households were redefined as landlord class. In the mass meetings, the old and new 'four bad elements' were attacked publicly just as before.

The famous Cultural Revolution happened in 1968.¹³ To the Ku villagers, they only remembered that many people died in this period. Many landlords and "four bad elements" were killed. Uncle Si recalled:

The village was also influenced by the Cultural Revolution. Many 'monsters and demons' (class enemies of all descriptions) were arrested and became the target of struggling again. The work teams entered into the villages again. Many bad elements were executed by shooting. Everyone was very scared. The bad elements and the counter-revolutionaries were paraded through the street to expose them before the public.

The Red Guards also went to Ku Village to look for remnants of the old feudal culture and for bourgeois influences. The genealogy of Ku Village was considered as decadent and superstitious; it was confiscated and burned. The religious books were taken as symbols of superstitious feudal thinking, too. All evidence of religious activity was destroyed or confiscated. The statues in *Guanyin* temple and other local shrines were destroyed. Even the traditional activities, like ancestral worship, were banned. The ancestral tablets were taken from the altars. In short, the efforts to eliminate traditional rituals were sweeping.

Indeed, the villagers had learned the lesson from the land reform and the Four Cleanups. Apart from a few young activists, the villagers did not participate in the Cultural Revolution actively. So, in a relative sense, the Cultural Revolution had less impact on Ku Village than land reform and collectivization. Although I could see the wall slogans of the Cultural Revolution elsewhere, the cadres said that it was only the fulfillment of the state policy in form. During the Culture Revolution, the activities changed from attacks on superstitious practices and former landlords to gang fighting. There was serious fighting between two parties -- the Red Flag (*hongqi*) and the Eastern Wind (*Dongfang*) in Meixian. Many people were killed only because they joined into either party. The members of these two parties came to the village to mobilize the brigade and production team to join their party. However, the

¹³. For general account of Cultural Revolution, see J. Chen, 1975; Myrdal & Kessle, 1970; Selden, 1979; Potter & Potter, 1990).

village cadres of Ku Village had lost their enthusiasm. Uncle Bi, as a party secretary of the brigade, firmly refused to join any parties. He said:

The Red Flag and Eastern Wind came to our village for establishing revolutionary ties. I refused to join any group because I had got the lessons. I found many people died in the fighting. Very terrible! They criticized my backward ideology. For the lives of our villagers, I insisted my stand. I gave orders to the production teams that no team was allowed to join any party. So our village was less affected by the campaign.

In the villagers' mind, it was an insane period. There was no truth, no order, and no security. Everyday you were in danger of becoming the "counter-revolutionaries". They told me a story that happened in Cultural Revolution.

There was a villager. He had prepared a coffin for his mother. One day he found there was a layer of dust on the coffin. So he cleaned the coffin. He tried to find some paper to cover the coffin. Suddenly he found there was a big picture of Chairman Mao on the floor. He just picked it up and used it to cover the coffin. In the Cultural Revolution, someone found the picture of Chairman Mao was on the coffin. He was arrested and executed as an active counter-revolutionary (*xianxing fa geming*).

The villagers told me another joke about "recalling past suffering and thinking over the source of present happiness" (*yiku sitian*).

When we were told to "recall past suffering and think over the source of present happiness", an old woman was asked to tell of her suffering in the "old society" (*jiu shehui*). But when she told about the Yuan Shi-kai era, she couldn't help saying that people were full in the Yuan era, but hungry nowadays. So the old woman said the Yuan era was the new society, but the Mao era was the 'old society'. In the end, the old woman was criticized as "anti-revolutionary".

Dazhai was set up as a national moral model at this time. "In agriculture learn from Dazhai" was painted in large red characters over the walls of Ku Village (see Picture 3.3). But the local cadres and villagers had learnt how to "*yang feng yin wei*" (overtly agree but covertly oppose, or feign compliance). When the policy was imposed from above, they only performed the ritual work (*biaomian gongfu*) like painting the slogan and organizing the mass meeting. In most mass meetings, the cadres read out the policy document or newspaper, and explained the directives from higher levels of government. But the villagers often fell into silence and seldom expressed their opinion. Some talked among themselves, some slept, and some

knitted. They seldom actively listened or responded in a meeting. Even if called upon to speak, they would not express their true feelings in the meeting. To the villagers, the meeting was just a ritual. It was meaningless and a waste of time. They also created doggerel to make fun of state policy. They said "*nongye xue dazhai, fu le yishen zhai*" (In agriculture, learning from Daizhai, we are heavily in debt). The doggerel spread among the villagers and everyone sang it everyday. The doggerel was the wisdom of the villagers, which reveals their views of state policy and their discontent with it. This can be also treated as everyday resistance by the peasants, which forms part of their counter-discourse. After the Cultural Revolution, the villagers wanted a stable environment for developing their production. From the mid-1970s to the early 1980s, it was a period for calm.

3.4. *Praise of Mao's China*

FEAR, HUNGER and CHAOS were the general feelings of the Ku villagers to Mao's China. But sometimes I heard a different voice from some villagers, who praised Mao's China. Initially I felt puzzled by these contradictory voices. Putting their discourse in context, I noticed that the villagers' praise of Mao was situational. By saying 'situational', I mean that their praise of Mao was purposeful, which was to accompany their dissatisfaction with Deng's China. In the coming chapters, I will explain how they adopted the history of Mao's era to negate the government of Deng. In this part, I will just broadly outline what the villagers praised about Mao's China.

In the economic sense, although the life of the villagers was very hard in the Maoist past, they thought it was more equal among the villagers than in Deng's era, except the 'black class'. The government guaranteed their basic grain (*jiben kouliang*). They would not feel inferior when they compared with each other. As Brother Wen-hua said, "Everyone was poor and everyone was equal." They occupied a similar social status - *nongmin* - which was defined by the CCP as the "Reddest" class and the most revolutionary class in "new China". It was quite popular to hear -- "peasants are the eldest brother, workers are the second eldest" (*nongmin shi dage, gong ren shi erge*).

They also thought that Mao's government was more responsible because it took care of the poor. Before the rural reform in the 1980s, the mountainous region of Meixian was classified as a poor-difficult region (*pingkun diqu*); the government subsidized this region every year. The Ku villagers also remembered that the government was responsible for providing social and welfare services to the villagers. For instance, the government provided free medical services by sending the "bare-foot doctors" (*chijiao yisheng*) to villages. The bare-foot doctors publicized information about maternal and child hygiene and taught the villagers how to prevent disease; also, they gave inoculations to the children. For another instance, Mao's government also took up *zeren* of taking care of the elders. *Wubaohu* (five guarantee households) and *kunanhu* (difficult households) could also receive different kinds of subsidies from the collective. So the elderly did not have to worry about their future. Free education was also provided by the government. The old villagers told me that students from the poor-difficult household could receive a subsidy from the government.

Several large-scale projects were constructed by the collective in Mao's era. The reservoirs, levees and canals were constructed for increasing the amount of irrigated land and protecting against floods or droughts. The hydro-electric station was also built in the collective era. All of these were regarded by Ku villagers as contributions by Mao's government, which had improved the living environment and agricultural technology.

The Ku villagers thought that social conduct was better in Mao's era rather than Deng's present. To them, people at that time were more *chun* (honest, simple or unsophisticated). There was less wickedness, e.g. social violence, robbery, plunder, rape, fraud and so on because the crimes were punished severely. In addition, there were less corrupt behaviour from the cadres. '*Lianjie*' (integrity) was a Chinese term the villagers adopted to describe the cadres in Mao's era. The villagers attributed the cadres' integrity to the frequent political campaigns which provided the opportunity for the villagers to fight against the corrupt cadres. During the campaigns, the villagers had an opportunity to expose the wrong things done by the local cadres to the work team which sent by the upper government.

The villager's historical narration was analogous to an Impressionist painting, mixing their feelings and imaginations. Whether negation or praise of the past, it was necessary to put their discourse into the historical context of social transformation in Deng's present. The historical experience not only greatly influenced the Ku villagers' perception of the Chinese Communist government, but also became part of their information to construct their ideal of good government. In their everyday narratives, the old villagers often recalled the experience in Mao's era and adopted it as a point of reference to compare the situation between Mao and Deng, and re-configure the image of the Chinese Communist government. This image and knowledge was transmitted through oral narration by the senior villagers to the younger members day to day. In Chapter 5, I will discuss how the Maoist past became a point of reference to compare with the present government.

3.5. Discussion

It is widely shared by scholars that before the rule of the communist government, the traditional state did not reach below the level of the county (*xian*). *Yamen*, a state administrative organization, set up at county level, was the representative of the state. The *Yamen* office symbolized the relationship between the state and society. There the leaders of society and the officers of the government met. The traditional state was mainly concerned with the maintenance of order and the collection of tax. The agrarian economy was chiefly an object of taxation, and peasants were chiefly a source of tax revenue. Aside from tax collection, the traditional state did not interfere much with agriculture and peasant life. During most of Chinese history, the state let society organize itself. Villages developed various forms of cooperation based on kinship, religion and other social ties (e.g. Huang, 1990, Duara, 1988; Schurmann, 1968; Zweig, 1989; Hsiao, 1960).

If these interpretations of relationship between the traditional state and rural society are right, we will find that the new regime was more ambitious than simply extracted surplus from the countryside. In last three decades, the CCP and its state machine's chief effort had been to reach out to control more and more aspects of economy, polity and culture. In Zweig's word, 'at no time in the past 350 years has

the state exercised as much power over the lives of its citizens" (1989:151). The land reform introduced by the CCP was designed to destroy the traditional elite and the local gentry, and to free people from tradition and superstition through redefining the social relations and meaning of life, as well as the redistribution of land. The collectivization further transformed rural China by integrating private property into the collective and creating an all-village collective economy, in order to produce food for its growing population and provide savings for industrialization. The state not only extended its vertical reach down to the village, but also the horizontal scope of its powers to the daily life of Chinese peasants, e.g. dress, sexuality, diet, health, and spiritual well being (Shurmann, 1968; Huang, 1990; Shue, 1988, Mueggler, 1991). The party branch committee secretary became the post-revolutionary equivalent of the old administrative village head(s). Based on my informants' recollection and other scholars' accounts, the power of local society was shared by different parties, e.g. local elite, elders, gentry, baozhang, clerks, and religious specialists. In the commune system, real power rested with the Party which made decisions in regard to all major activities of the rural society. The Party organization paralleled the formal apparatus of the government at every level. It represented the ideology of the central government and the link between the leadership and the masses.

The collectivization had not eliminated the fact that a new privileged class had emerged. The village cadres became the new patrons of rural society, who derived authority from their ability to monopolize resource distribution and to influence the life chance of peasants. In the collective, villagers lost their control on resources and means of production, their labour process, their products and interaction with the market. Participation in collective production became the only source of subsistence. So the villagers economically depended on their production, and personally depended on the village cadres for more benefits. For loyalty and support from the peasants in the political campaign, the local cadres exchanged resources with the villagers. So as Oi point out, the structure of the socialist system determined the patron-client relation in rural China (Oi, 1989).

The role of the new patron, in socialist society, however, was somewhat different from the traditional one. Many scholars have mentioned the dilemma of local cadres in rural China (e.g. Shue, 1988; Zweig, 1989; Huang, 1990; Oi, 1989).

Some scholars (e.g. Shue) argued that the local cadres in Mao's era somehow still acted as traditional gentry who often protected the local interest of their fellow villagers by employing different kinds of strategies such as withholding the truth, mis-reporting data and other strategies to resist the state policy. Shue stated very clearly in her small book *The Reach of the State*:

It seems quite clear that local cadres in horizontally regarding or regional units who stayed in their positions for any length of time inevitably came to identify with and represent the interests of their localities and regions. Their own careers and reputations were, after all, intimately tied to the fates of those areas and regions. The mind set of these local officials was strongly characterized by an inclination to pursue the interests of their own areas against other areas and, when necessary, against the demands of the vertical state apparatus (1988:56).

Zweig held a similar view. As he stated:

The cadres monitored local activities and used their party authority to dominate village politics. They were also the major agents of state interests in the countryside. However, team and brigade officials' positions in local society also force them to consider the interests of their fellow villagers (1989:155).

Although there were some similarities between local cadres and traditional gentry or patrons, we still could recognize the difference between the two. As Schurmann point out, the gentry's economic power was based on land ownership, its political power was based on its relationships to the state bureaucracy, and its social power was based on its traditional status (1968:497). In additional, their legitimacy in villages was granted by villagers based on their ability to hold expensive ceremonies, make large religious contributions and give personal loans and donations (Duara, 1988). In contrast, the authority of village cadres derived from their positions in the administrative hierarchy. The structural limitation lowered their incentive to protect the interests of the village. When the policy was imposed from the upper government, they often complied with the requirements of the state.

I am not interested in the debate of whether village cadres still play the role of traditional elite or not. To me, the role of the village cadres is never static, but dynamic and fluid. They situationally decided which role they want to play. In the case of Ku Village, sometimes the local cadres colluded with the state; sometimes

they colluded with their co-villagers. It mostly depended on the situation in different campaigns. They would calculate the cost and benefit of their choice. When they ensured that their collusion was safe, they would do their best to protect the interests of the village. So I would not say that the common clan or lineage guarantees the collusion between the villagers and the cadres. The sense of identity and solidarity among the villagers should not be romanticized as something autonomous and given. It is also dynamic and fluid. In the villager's narration, I knew that sometimes village solidarity and identity forced the cadres to refuse to implement the state policy properly; but sometimes it did not matter anymore.

Moreover, the case of Ku Village suggests that the achievement of collectivization was superficial, without obtaining consent from below. The everyday narrative of Mao's past can be also treated as part of their cultural resistance. Their discussion of rural relations before and during Mao's era discredits the official discourse on class struggle that is still taught in schools throughout China. To the villagers, the village was not made up of wealthy landlords and rich peasants pitted against a ruthlessly exploited mass of decent poor and lower-middle peasants. It was common poverty, not exploitative class relations and class polarization, that characterized village life. In the eyes of the villagers, the class-struggle campaigns imposed by party outsiders were always counterproductive, because the rigid class labels divided rather than united the community, which hurt the *ganqing* and *guanxi* among the villagers. Although the compulsory commune system had replaced the traditional rural organization, the social relation or the traditional *guanxi* had been redefined in terms of 'comradeship', and religious belief had been banned under the ideology of atheism or materialist Marxism, we could find the CCP government could not totally change the villagers' worldview, their conception of morality and *guanxi* ties. People's *guanxi* ties still influenced their operations in everyday life, e.g. job distribution. The quick revival of the traditional organization and religious activities further proved the failure of the CCP government in cultural project. I will discuss it in Chapter 8. Villager's everyday resistance in collective production also reflected their dissent from the policy of the socialist government. There were no open and noisy confrontations because the state had controlled the means of production and forces. As Havel states, people kept in silence in the socialist country not because

they had been persuaded, but due to the police force, coercion, violence and threat (Havel, 1991). They always resisted in hidden, unnoticeable, and safe ways. It was the "hidden transcript", in Scott's term (Scott, 1990). It also reflected what Gramsci said, domination without hegemony (Gramsci, 1991).

In short, this chapter just aims to, understand how the Ku villagers read their history and how they perceived their life in Mao's era. The question of how history was consumed by the villagers, and served for the present purpose, will be discussed in coming chapters.



3.1. slogan I



3.2. slogan II



3.3. slogan III

Chapter 4: Zhifu -- The Making and Unmaking of Local Development

In Ku village, I had several good friends who were around 25 to 28. Maybe because we had similar age, we could share many things with each other. Brother Li was of them. I remembered the first time I stayed at Ku Village, he wasn't there. His father told me that he went to work (dagong) in Guangzhong's foreign-invested medicine factory. I met him when I returned to Ku Village again. According to the sub-genealogy, we had a close kin relationship because we had the same great-grand father. I was older than he. He came to visit me for the sake of courtesy (li mao).

One night when I was relaxing and listening to the popular music, Brother Li came in and we started to discuss popular music. The young people in Ku Village now listened to pop music, had fashionable haircuts, wore fashionable T-shirts and jeans, and rode motorbikes. The youth culture was changing, as they say, 'not much different from the urban'.

Brother Li, aged twenty-eight, had worked in the medicine factory for about three years. Before that, he had worked in two electronic factories in the Pearl River Delta. All of these jobs were introduced by relatives who had guanxi connection with the supervisors or administrative personnel of the factories.

"After my schooling, I stayed at home to help cultivate my family's field and plant the Shatian pomelo. At the time, villagers still didn't grow pomelo on a large scale. Each family only had ten to twenty trees. You know, there is a harvest season and a slack season in farming. In the slack season, I had nothing to do. It was so boring..." Brother Li was happy to tell me about his past.

"Some of my classmates and fellow villagers at my age went to dagong in Guangzhou, Shenzhen, PRD or Shantou. They wrote to me and told how exciting life was in these cities. They sent money back to their parents at important festivals. They also brought expensive things back, e.g. radio recorders, TVs, electric fans and so on. I felt so envious and useless... After consideration, I told my father I wanted to go out to find jobs elsewhere. I remember my father kept silence for a while when he

heard what I said. Then he turned to me and said, "I'll write to your uncle." After about a month, I was introduced by my uncle to work in an electronic factory in Dongguan. The boss was a Xianggang ren (Hongkongese)."

Brother Li had changed his job in several factories. Sometimes because the factory was bankrupt; sometimes because he couldn't get used to the environment of that factory. I interrupted him: "Your father told me that you wouldn't go back to the factory. Why didn't you stay longer?"

"Yes, I decided to stay at home," he stopped for a while and then said, "Before I went to dagong, I was very excited and imagined life in the factory would be very good. I was so happy that my dream of becoming an urban worker had been achieved... After working in the factory for about a month, my fresh feeling and excitement gradually went away. I felt bored and meaningless. I worked in a packing department. Everyday I almost did the same job and worked more than twelve hours. The work was so tiring and stressful. Each month I earned only several hundred reminbi. But the expenditure was large in the big city (dachengshi). There was no fun, no freedom. At first I thought maybe it was only the case of this factory. But after changing several factories, I knew everywhere was the same. I missed the freedom of the rustic life ... Last month I got a letter from my father. He told me the market of Shatian pomelo was quite good in these years. The villagers grew more and more pomelo trees. My father also had planted more than 50 trees and needed many hands to till it. I am the only son in our family. I think I have zeren to help my father. So I quit my job and came back."

"Comparing the industrial life with the rustic life, I think I enjoy life in village; at least I have much freedom. I can decide when to work and when to stop, when to get up and when to sleep. It is said, 'dangguan jiaohua lan zuoguan' (a beggar cannot adapt to be an official). Country folk (xiangxia ren) don't like too much limitation. Now the pomelo has a good price. The income won't be lower than working in factories." Brother Li repeatedly emphasized why he returned to the village... Brother Li was not an exceptional case. In Ku Village, there were about 10 young people, same as Li, were fed up with working in factories and had returned to the village.

* * * *

The mobility of the agricultural population was one of the remarkable characteristics in the era of China's "*gaige kaifang*" (reform and open door). It was described by the government as "*mingong chao*" (tide of migrant labour) or, pejoratively, as "*mangliu*" (blind flow). Yes, they are like the tide, flowing and ebbing. But they are by no means blind. They left the village for living out their dreams. Some remained in the city, and some returned home. Some became rich, and some stayed as poor as before. But whether the people went to the city or stayed in the village, they had the same dream, that is -- making money (*zhuanqian*) and getting rich (*zhifu*). *Zhuanqian* and *zhifu* are the dominant rhetoric which represent the social characteristics in the era of *gaige kaifang*. Basically these two terms are interrelated and interchangeable. *Zhuanqian* is the means for *zhifu*, and *zhifu* is the aim of *zhuanqian*. People have a common desire of making money because they recognize the power of money. I often heard these statements in Ku Village:

"*Youqian neng shi gui tui mo*" (Money can make the ghost turn the millstone)

"*Youqian haobanshi*" (Money can make the things easily done)

"*Xianzhai shenme dou jiangqian, meiyou qian, shenme dou buyongjiang*" (Now everything is money; no money, no talk)

Desire, in Deleuze and Guattari's sense, is neither biological instincts, nor metaphysical energy, nor a symbolic structure. Rather, it is created, planned and organized in and through social production. They have made a precise and appropriate analysis about how desire creates by making social lack. They state:

Lack (*manque*) is created, planned, and organized in and through social production. ... It is never primary; production is never organized on the basis of a pre-existing need or lack (*manque*). It is that infiltrates itself, creates empty spaces or vacuoles, and propagates itself in accordance with the organization of an already existing organization of production. The deliberate creation of lack as a function of market economy is the art of a dominant class. This involves deliberately organizing wants and needs (*manque*) amid an abundance of production; making all of desire teeter and fall victim to the great fear of not having one's needs satisfied; and making the object dependent upon a real production that is supposedly exterior to desire, while at the same time the production of desire is categorized as fantasy and nothing but fantasy (1983:28).

In China, to understand how the desire of making money and getting rich was created in the era of *gaige kaifang*, we have to understand how the social lack was made and conditioned by the historical factors and the existing social relation.¹ If Deleuze and Guattari are right in saying “the deliberate creation of lack as a function of market economy is the art of a dominant class”, then creation of desire of *zhuanqian* and *zhifu* is no more natural or just for fun, it serves the regime of Deng and its development policy. The material poverty of Chinese peasants is more than a social fact, rather it is the mnemonic sign which can be used by the power for naturalizing the rural reform in the post-Mao period, as well as used by the people to delegitimaze the regime. How the ‘social lack’ was consumed by the government in the making of the rural development will be discussed later in this chapter.

Superficially, *zhuanqian* or *zhifu* is the common passion of the Chinese in the reform era. But I doubt whether the meaning of *zhuanqian* or *zhifu* is totally the same to all the villagers; I also suspect villagers' desire for *zhifu* is static and unchangeable. In villagers' everyday practices, I found that the meaning of *zhuanqian* to a peasant is quite different among the villagers; and the implication of *zhifu* to a peasant is also different from what the government claimed. In the reform era, the “new” knowledge of development, e.g. the concept of a socialist market economy in terms of commodity production, profit maximization and large scale of production, was invented by the government and has been deployed in the countryside of China. The rural reform during the first stage has seduced villagers' desire of making money. However, the real economic and social situation constrained their desire and awakened their dream of becoming urban residents and making money. Therefore somehow the villagers still persist in their own views of economy, e.g. land, labour, time, consumption and production relationship, which are the result of a negotiated process of meaning making in their everyday life. Their fear of food shortage and subsistence crisis still can be glimpsed in their daily conversation. The “safety first” principle is their first consideration rather than profit maximization. Moreover, most of the time they likely define their *guanxi* in production and economy in terms of

¹: As the details of history under Mao has been presented in last chapter, in this chapter I only outline several important points.

zeren, rather than wage and profit, among the family members and among the villagers.

In this chapter, I will see how the economic changed at local level in the reform era; how the villagers practice their economic production in everyday. I will also focus on examining the villager's view of *zhifu* and *zhuanqian*, and to what extent their conception of *zhifu* and ways of practices differ from the official version. Another important purpose of this chapter is try to investigate how villagers' conception of *guanxi* and *zeren* constitutes their economic practice in everyday life, which is extended and applied in defining their *guanxi* with the government.

4.1. The Creation of Social Lack

Many scholars of China studies share a view that the poverty of rural society in Mao's China was institutionally created (e.g. Selden, 1993; Riskin, 1991; Solinger, 1993). It was basically due to the ideology of developmentalism which was built on the imagining of a utopia of a highly industrialized nation.

In the Chinese Marxist view, the primitive accumulation of socialist capital in China had to be through collectivization, in which the state confiscated all the land from the villagers and planned all the production of rural society. Its aim and strategy was to extract raw materials and resources from the rural to support the urban industrialization (Selden 1988, 1993; Riskin, 1991, Schurmann, 1968; Solinger, 1993). In Mao's design, "(t)he peasants' collective economic organizations are just like factories. They are also units of production. Within these collective economic units the relationship between the collective and the individual must be properly regulated and properly managed" (Mao, 1988:720-744). More importantly and often hidden, villagers working in the collective or agricultural factories would prevent their hiding surplus grain. The 'three fixed policy' -- unified purchase quota, unified sale quota and unified production quota -- was the chief policy to guarantee the extraction of surplus from rural society. Private marketing activities and sideline production were further curbed. The purposes were to assure ample cheap food for urban residents and to channel agricultural surplus from the countryside towards industry and the cities (Mueggler, 1991; Cheng and Selden, 1994; Schurmann, 1968).

The development policy of Mao's government created a deep split between the rural and the urban. From 1950s onward the gap in income and benefits grew significantly in favor of the city over the countryside. According to a report from the World Bank in 1983, it was estimated that the urban-rural income gap was 2.2 to 1. But some scholars like Rawski calculated the gap at 3.4 to 1 excluding subsidies, as high as 5.9 to 1 with subsidies included (1982:12-26). In addition to the income gap, the urban workers won a considerable amount of social welfare and fringe benefits, e.g. lifetime employment, retirement pensions, free health care, housing and food subsidies, that the rural population did not enjoy. According to Mark Selden, by 1978 these subsidies averaged 526 yuan per state worker, 82% of the average nominal wage, and accounted for 13% of national income (Selden, 1993:168). For the collective peasants, Nicholas Lardy (1983) estimated that the total package of price subsidies and fringe benefits was less than 10 yuan per person. Of course the extraordinary subsidies for state-sector workers were made possible by the appropriation of rural resources via the compulsory sale system.

Moreover, the *hukou* system further strengthened the urban-rural chasm. The *hukou* system was implemented in the late 1950s which made the division between the *nongcun* (rural) *hukou* and the *chengshi* (urban) *hukou*. On 9th January 1958, the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress promulgated the *Regulation on Household Registration in the People's Republic of China*.² This system was formally backed up by military and public security forces. The *hukou* system was related to the ration and welfare services. Without a *hukou*, one could not officially be eligible for food, clothing or shelter, one could not obtain employment, schooling, marry or join the army (*dangbing*). *Hukou* also made the urban-rural hierarchy. Those people with *nongcun hukou* were not eligible for enjoying the same sort of benefits as the urban citizens. This system was strictly implemented, especially in times of famine in the early 1960s, for preventing the villagers from flowing to cities in order to reduce the pressure on the urban areas.

Hukou system also functioned very well to control the population mobility in Mao's era. It gave clear instructions concerning registration of temporary residence

² . see Gu-cheng Li, 1992, *A Glossary of Political Terms of the People's Republic of China*. Hongkong: The Chinese University of Hongkong Press.

among the floating population. According to the Article 15 and 16 of the Registration Regulation ,

Citizens who temporarily live for more than three days outside the county or city of permanent residence need to be reported to the household registration organs for registration of temporary residence by the head of the household at the place of temporary residence or by themselves, with three days, and report for cancellation before departure.

When citizens leave their place of permanent residence for private matters and the period of temporary residence exceeds three months, they must apply to the household registration organs for extension of the period or go through the procedures for migration; if they neither have reason for extending the period nor the conditions for migration, they should return to their place of permanent residence.

In the late 1950s, the socialist state well demonstrated how they controlled the population migration through the *hukou* system. The Great Leap Forward provided a great opportunity for the rural-urban migration because of the sudden explosion of urban industrial jobs and construction jobs. At the time, the urban enterprises required abundant temporary labour from rural areas. In autumn 1958, it was estimated that 38 million people mobilized to leave their villages (Cheng and Selden, 1994:665). However, the failure of the Great Leap Forward forced the state to send the rural population back to the countryside by using rigorous administrative measures (*xingzheng shouduan*). The *hukou* system guaranteed the state to clear up a messy situation. Obviously, peasants were nothing, but merely the agents of extraction of surplus labour. When they lost their utility, they became scrap materials which would be thrown back to the countryside.

The *hukou* system not only created the urban-rural chasm, but it also produced the sense of loss and inferiority of the villagers. In the Foucauldian sense, the state institutions not only created 'peasant others' through the "dividing practice" and "scientific classification", it also helped the peasants to turn themselves into subjects. In Chapter 3, I have mentioned how the CCP government established the 'regime of truth' via creating the rejectable others - the old society and backward social groups. The formation of the discourse basically was under the ideology of developmentalism; more specifically, Marxist historical materialism. The official discourse assumed a teleology in which human societies would follow a historical path from feudalism to

capitalism to socialism to communism. Peasant values and culture were frequently attacked as residues of feudalism, and the peasants were represented as backward and pitiable. So the CCP's mission was to rescue the Chinese from the old society. Beyond the discourse, the mode of social existence under Mao also provided peasants the authentic living experience which reinforced their sense of powerlessness and inferiority. As a result, they accepted themselves as backward, lacking high education, high technology, urban life style and so on. In Ku Village, people often compared their life with those of the urban citizens. In our dialogue, I could still sense their sad feelings as peasants.

Hok-Bin, *nongmin* is the lowest category (*zui xiajian*). It is looked down on by everybody. Do you know what the urban people say about us? Peasants' legs are filled with cow dung (*Nongmin yijiao niufen*).

Doing farming work is good for nothing (*mei chuxi*). Peasants suffer poverty throughout their life (*yibeizi aiqiong*).

Staying in the village is good for nothing. I hope my children can succeed in education and '*chu ren tou di*' (rise head and shoulders above other i.e. stand out among one's fellow).

In the village, I had also some opportunities to share with the young villagers about their views of livelihood, economy and the development of Ku Village. My good friend Brother Xin's view in some sense reflects how the young villagers view themselves and their expectation of life in future:

Xin: Brother Hok-Bin, how do you feel this time? Is there any change in the village?

Hok-Bin: Well, I find there are more pomelo trees, aren't there?

Xin: Yes, every household plants as many as they can. I have planted about 200 pomelo trees. No alternative, in the village, we can only depend on the fruit trees.

Hok-Bin: Not bad, 200 trees must earn a lot of money per year.

Xin: No, there are only about 80 trees bearing fruit. The other trees had to wait for three to five years. It is my shiye (career). I have invested a lot of money in it. If the market is good, I will concentrate on Shatian pomelo. I have many plans, building another new house for my brother, getting a wife for my brother, and getting a motorbike.... Acting as the head of family is uneasy.

Ho-Bin: I think life in the village isn't bad. Your income isn't less than a putong gongren (ordinary worker).

Xin: I can only agree with you partly. Now we have what the urban citizens had, but I think village is always village, there is still some urban-rural gap. In the village, there is not much development, only Shatian pomelo. Although it has a good price, there is no guarantee in future. Now I try to make as much money as possible. I plan to send my son to the city and accept education there. Staying in the village is without future (mei chuxi). The life in the village is still hard. Stop working, stop eating.

The open door policy of Deng Xiao-ping weakened the ability of the socialist government in controlling information and its system of ideological control. It further strengthened villagers' feeling of lack because the villagers, especially in coastal provinces, were able to obtain the comparative knowledge about the city life in China and foreign countries. Becoming an urban citizen or having an urban life is still a goal some villagers pursued, especially the young villagers. Through the mass media and their own visits to the cities, they knew what city life was like. In their view, high buildings, convenient transportation, western dress, electric housing appliances, facilities and so on symbolized the modern city life. The affluent city life became the goal of the villagers, which seduced the desire of villagers to *zhuanqian* for the sake of, in some villagers' term, "becoming more modern" and "having a city living-standard".

In short, the desire of the Chinese peasants was somewhat produced by the social void which was conditioned by historical factors. They had a common passion to '*chu ren tou di*'. '*Chu ren tou di*' to Chinese peasants implies the desire to move to city, to become urban residents, to improve their life, to have an urban life style, to have income similar to the urban citizens and many other things. Deng's policy coincided with the peasants' desire, which provided an opportunity for the rural population to live out their desires. In some sense, peasants' desires were made by the Deng's government to serve for its new development policy or serve for the interest of foreign capital.

4.2. Who Made the Rural Reform

The Third Plenum of the 11th Central Committee of the Communist Party in 1978 symbolized the new age and the beginning of *gaige kaifang*. The whole nation celebrated the new beginning and the passing of the old regime. The new socialist state imagined itself as rational and progressive, and claimed as its mission to

transform the rural society and lead the peasants out of the poverty. People imagined that the new regime would bring them to good future.

For the new regime, to naturalize its new policy, past 'others' had to be dispelled from the new-age present. In Deng's China, the present 'others' were two: Mao's regime and traditional Chinese society, which constructed the opposition to modernity. Examining the document of the CCP and the opening talks of Deng in the early 1980s, it is not difficult to find that Deng's new regime tried create an image that the backwardness, poverty, and stagnation of the country was owed to the personal mistakes of Mao Ze-dong, or the 'extreme leftist route' of his government. For example, in the "Resolution of Certain Historical Problems of the Party since the Establishment of the Nation", it is stated:

In 1958, the 2nd Plenum of the 8th Central Committee of the Party approved the basic line and direction of the socialist construction. It correctly reflected the universal will and demand of the people to transform the backward economy and cultural condition of country. However, its drawback was due to its neglect of the objective economic rules.

... due to the lack of experience in socialist construction, and the lack of recognizing an economic development rule and the basic condition of China's economy, and due to the pride and complacency of Comrade Mao Ze-dong, and the intoxication in victory of many central and local comrades. The subjective will and subjective effects were exaggerated because of the urgent need to make achievements. Without serious investigation, research and experiment, the 'Great Leap Forward' movement and the rural collectivization movement were carried out soon after the launch of General line. Thus the leftist orientation, characterized by high goals, blind direction, exaggeration and the 'communist wind' was extensively prevalent.³

In the Resolution, Deng's government also attributed the backwardness and poverty of the country to the 'anti-revolutionary' activities of Lin Biao and "the Gang of Four". He insisted that economic growth had to take precedence over the class struggle which was advocated in Mao's era. Mao was criticized for the mistake of mobilizing the Cultural Revolution, which seriously created political and economic disorder in the country. Deng's openly recognizing the mistake of the CCP and pointing out the mistake of Mao was simply for the sake of legitimating the new

³. see *Sanzhong quanhu yilai: Zhongyao wenxian xuanbian xia* (Selected Important Documents since the Third Plenum). Beijing,: Renmin Chubanshe. 1982:805. My own translation.

reform policy of his government. But he did not negate Mao and his policy totally, as they inherited the common root of socialist revolution. Totally negating Mao would also threaten Deng's legitimacy, so that he concluded that Mao's merits occupied 70% and faults occupied 30% (*qifen gong, sanfen guo*).⁴

In the mainstream academic discourse, most of the mainland scholars maintained the view that there were three factors that caused the stagnation and failure of agriculture development in the Maoist past: 1) the mistakes of the state policy; 2) the low education level of the peasants; 3) the selfishness of the small peasant ideology (e.g. Lu, 1992; Shi etc. 1990; Huang etc. 1991; Guo, 1992; Wang etc. 1992; Chen etc. 1992). Chinese peasants in these discourses are not only the victims of the wrong state policy, they themselves are also the obstacles of rural development. So the backward looking peasant needed the help of the CCP -- the unproductive resources had to be developed, and the past systems had to be denigrated, dismantled and replaced by a rational policy designed by an enlightened ruler. Hence the legitimacy of the new government was naturally grounded on their ability to effect development of China. All of these messages can be conveyed in the following quotation:

In the 70s and 80s of 20th century, Chinese villages experienced a great and deep transformation. This transformation had a deep impact and important historical meaning although people were unable to make a fair judgment at the moment. But we can see 0.8 billion peasants have obtained the guarantee of food, clothing, shelter and transportation. The spirit of science, democracy, competition, and creativity have taken root and rapidly developed in Chinese villages. The dejected Chinese peasants reveal smiles on their faces. The sleeping villages are now glowing with vigor. Therefore, at least we can say the rural reform is the turning point of Chinese rural development in history. It implies that Chinese peasants start to control their own fortune and walk on the road of bloom and opulence.

Since the Third Plenum of the 11th Central Committee of the CCP, our Party based on the real situation of the countryside and systematically carried out the policy of enriching people. The central idea is comrade Deng Xiao-ping's 'let some people first become rich'.... Under the guidance of the direction of zhifu, Chinese villagers will achieve

⁴. see *Deng Xiao-ping Wen Xuan* (Selected Essays of Deng Xiao-ping) 1994, Beijing: Renmin Chubang She.

modernization, Chinese peasants will walk to the socialist future with the same heart (Shi, etc. 1990:1-11. my own translation).

To Deng Xiao-ping, the aim of *gaige kaifang* was to “develop economy, and achieve four times (*fanliangfan*) the national total output value at the end of this century, that is about 800 US dollars per person.”⁵ The strategies of *gaige kaifang* was to let part of the people and part of the regions get rich first (*rang bufengren he bufeng diqu de ren fuqilai*). In rural areas, the first thing was to dismantle the collective and release the labour of production. The other important things were to carry out the household responsibility system, develop a commodity and market economy, and develop township and village enterprises. In sum, the whole discourse not only afforded a new vista of China’s development, but also provided a new justification of the new regime.

Deng is regarded as the ‘Architect of the Economic Reforms’ of China. The economic development and “success” of China in these twenty years is intuitively considered as the result of right and brave policy of Deng and his government. Chinese peasants are “normally” treated as a powerless and unorganized group, and as nearly irrelevant to political and economic outcomes. However, in my view, history is created by the people, not merely made by any single individual, no matter how great. However, many studies have pointed out that the household responsibility carried out in *gaige kaifang* was invented by the Chinese peasants. They showed evidence that before the rural reform was formally carried out in nationwide scope, the family responsibility system was widely adopted by the peasants in secret in different areas of China (e.g. Kelliher, 1993; Vogel, 1989; Zhou, 1996; Johnson, 1982; Wang, 1992). The most famous case was Fengyang in central Sichuan province, which was the pioneer of the household responsibility. Vogel’s study of Guangdong province also provides us stories of how the villages in poor mountainous areas divided their land without the permission of the upper government:

In early 1979 Guangdong provincial officials received reports that in very poor areas like Haikang County (Zhanjiang Prefecture) and in remote mountainous areas like Zijin County (Huiyang Prefecture), local teams had taken the initiative on a wide scale in assigning land to households even during rice-growing season. Official policy did not

⁵. see Deng Xiao-ping’s *Jianshe you zhongguo tese de shehui zhuyi* (Construction of the Socialism with Chinese Characteristics). p58-59.

yet permit this, and local officials tried to clamp down. In Zijin, higher-level cadres went down to villages to stop it in March, June and September 1979, and yet over the year, as they later discovered, the number of teams practicing it increased from 1300 to 3700. An investigation of the situation there and in nearby Henyuan and Heiping counties began on June 10, 1980, led by the head of the provincial Agriculture Commission, Du Ruizhi. At meetings from June 19 to 25, the team members discussed their findings with officials. Du reported back to the province that the assignment of land to individual families was even more widespread than previously reported, that the peasants were pleased, and that despite bad weather, production had improved substantially (1989:95).

Johnson (1982), also found that more than 20% of the work teams had already secretly adopted the family responsibility system in the PRD region. The work teams divided the land and led the peasants to develop different kinds of sideline activities, e.g. growing sugar cane, bananas, and other fruits. Throughout the 70s, there was everywhere a 'silent' revolution at the bottom. I agree with what Zhou said: "Without farmer's initiative in *baochan daohu* and without the *baochan daohu* demonstration effect, Wanli and Beijing intellectuals would not have discovered *baochan daohu*" (1996:8) Thus the rural reform initiated in the early 1980s by Deng's regime were simply an acceptance of the invention of the Chinese peasant. Of course, the state intervention accelerated the scope and rate of the change

4.3. Ku Village in Economic Transformation

In the early 1980s, when rural reform began, the peasants in many areas moved quickly to dismantle collective farming and chose instead to farm as individual households. According to Croll (1994), the legitimization of rural decollectivization and the adoption of production responsibility system after 1981 resulted in the dismantlement of more than 50,000 communes within two years.

The core of the new agricultural policy adopted was the so-called "production responsibility system". The central theme was to reorganize production from one based on the collective to one based on the individual households. It aims to stimulate the enthusiasm of peasants in production and increase the agricultural productivity because peasants will earn whatever they can get from the land and their income is once again related to their effort and performance. There were enormous kinds of

responsibility system occurring from 1979 to 1985 such as: specialized contracts, compensation linked to output (*zhuan ye chengbao, lianchan jichou*); unified management, output linked to labour (*tongyi jingying, lianchan jichou*); production contracted to groups, compensation linked to output (*baochan dao zu, lianchan jichou*); production contracted to household (*baochan daohu*) or linking output to the household (*lianchan daohu*); tasks contracted to household (*baogan daohu*) or big contracting of production (*dabao gan*) (Hartford, 1985).

Different teams employed different kinds of systems in the early 1980s. But in Songnan commune, all the brigades adopted the "big contracting of production" system in 1981 (See Table 4.1). The change of mode of production remolded the state and peasant *guanxi* that was defined in the notion of contract. According to Ross, since the introduction of the household responsibility system, more and more villagers appeared to conceive of their *guanxi* with the state in contractual terms (Ross, 1989:63). For instance, under the grain purchase policy, villagers commonly entered into contracts with township governments that obliged them to sell grain to the state but that also obliged the township governments to supply production materials, including low-priced fertilizer, seeds, and so on. However, the local practices were not exactly the same in rural China. In Meixian, at least in Songnan township, the villagers did not receive any other production materials except the contracted land. In Songnan's household-contracting system, an individual household received a contract for fixed plots of land in return for a fixed payment and obligation to the state, including grain taxes, welfare funds, collective investments, procurement quotas and so on. The household keeps all other products for its own use or for sale. This method implies that there is no more "unified distribution" of the teams' products. Villagers basically become self-employed and they "compensate" themselves directly with their own output. They have also responsibility for providing their own food needs.⁶

⁶. People interested in the details of other kinds of responsibility systems can read Kathleen Hartford, 1985, p.p.31-61. "Socialist Agricultural Dead: Long Live Socialist Agriculture! Organizational Transformation in Rural China" in E.J. Perry and C. Wong Eds. *The Political Economy of Reform in Post-Mao China*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press. People interested in the details of the division of land and responsibility system in rural China can also read E. Croll 1994. *From Heaven to Earth*. London: Routledge; G. E. Johnson, 1982. "The Production Responsibility System in Chinese Agriculture: Some Examples from Guangdong." *Pacific Affairs* 55:430-451; E. R. Judd, 1992. "Land Divided, Land United." *The China Quarterly* 130:338-356; A. Lu, 1987. "The Reform of Land Ownership and the Political Economy of Contemporary China." *Peasant Studies* 14:229-249; J. Unger,

Table 4.1. Production Responsibility System in Mei County 1981

commune	brigade	teams	type1	type2	type3	type4	type5	type6	type7
Chengdong	13	163	2			1			160
Chengbei	20	289	9			1		3	276
Chengjiang	16	229	4					7	218
Meijiang	13	193	1						192
Shishan	12	246	2						244
Meixi	15	224	5					2	217
Shikang	14	177							177
Shuiku	2	9							9
Daping	12	161	1						160
Nankou	18	285				5			280
Yaoshang	14	167	3						164
Hesi	15	198			1				195
Jingyi	5	56							56
Fangjiang	17	273							273
Shuiche	18	217	1						216
Meinan	13	143							218
Changsha	12	106				1			104
Xiyang	14	127							127
Baigong	14	170	2						168
Bicun	22	266	1	2			1	16	246
Yanyang	16	182	34				1	4	143
Sancun	12	116	2						114
Songkou	16	205					1		204
Songdong	11	105						1	104
*Songnan	13	149							149
Songyuan	22	376	5						371
Longwen	14	227	3						224
Taorao	15	161							161
Baidu	24	278	5				3		270
Fuda	4	58						2	56
Songkou	2	22							
Total	428	5578	81	2	1	8	6	36	5443

Source: Mei County Statistic Bureau, 1982. *Agricultural Statistic Data of All Communes in 1981*.

Note: Type1 - Collective Production

Type2 - Partial Contracting out System

Type3 - Specialized Contract, Compensation Linked to Output

Type4 - Production Contracted to Groups, Compensation Linked to Output

Type5 - Unified Management, Output Linked to Labour

Type6 - Production Contracted to Household

Type7 - Linking Output to the Household or Big Contracting of Production

The "big contracting of production" were accompanied by land redistribution. In Ku Village, the responsibility system and land redistribution was carried out in 1981. According to Uncle Bi, the policy of "big contracting of production" (*dabao*

gan) was not implemented smoothly because there were different reactions and responses to this policy among the villagers and cadres. The villagers, brigade and team cadres popularly accepted and welcomed this policy. But the commune cadres were not willing to carry out this system. He said:

At the time, the commune cadres could not straighten out their thinking. They thought it was only taking the road back to the "old society" if all the collective land was distributed to individual. But we [brigade cadres] strongly welcomed the policy because it was the way for bringing us to riches. In reality, dividing the land to the household only means renting the land to the individual, not the individual having the ownership of the land. Their thinking is so foolish! But they were under the pressure from upper government and local masses. In the end, the land was divided to individual households.

But in Uncle Nian-hua's interpretation, the commune cadres in fact did not worry about "taking the road back to old society" (*zou huitou lu*), but they worried that the central government would change their policy again and they also feared that they would lose their power and authority. He told me another story about the land division.

They [commune cadres] weren't willing to carry out the policy because they worried they would lose their power to control us. After the land division, the commune no more retained their role in centralized planning over the production and unified distribution of the resource. We [the brigade] did not need to listen to their orders any more.

Some local cadres felt depressed since they felt they were the losers and the scapegoats for past mistakes. After the decollectivization, these cadres lost the most because the collective economy which had given them power was dismantled.

In 1981, the production teams in Ku Village adopted a responsibility system locally referred to as "divide the land to the households" (*fentian daohu*). The land includes wet fields (*shui tian*) and dry land (*han di*). The wet fields and dry land were divided into three grades, determined by quality, productivity, degree of slope, and irrigation conditions. Land was allocated to each household based on the number of mouths to feed and its available labour supply. Household representatives drew lots for plots in each grades. In Ku Village, the wet fields occupies about 210 mu, and the dry land is about 37 mu. Each person can receive only 0.8 mu cultivated land in average. Since all the arable land had been distributed, so the newborn family

members could not receive any additional land. The villagers called the principle as 'sheng bu bu, shi bu shou' (no additional land to the newborn, no confiscation of the land when the old die).⁷ The land divided by drawing lots would make the household receive their allotment in scattered pieces, but the villagers believed that it was a fairly easy arrangement for the division of land. More important, they believed that this method would reduce dispute and conflict among the villagers because it was decided by their fortune (*yunshu*). Nothing was to blame except their own fortune. Some villagers abandoned their assigned fields which were located at remote areas.⁸

After the division of land, each peasant household had to meet the compulsory rice purchase quotas. The purchasing price of grain was 28-30 yuan per 100 jin. Before 1992, the villagers had to meet the compulsory rice purchase quotas in kind. They were required to pay 30 jin each mu. But in 1992, a new rule allowed them to pay their rice-delivery quotas to the state in cash, rather than in rice. The taxes are collected by the administrative district committee. According to a former team leader Uncle Leng, the cadres took up this task because the cadres could earn the commission from the tax bureau. This policy resulted in releasing peasants from the rice production and allowed them to shift to more profitable commercial agriculture. Some households began to grow more fruit and vegetables on their contracted land. Apart from the compulsory grain purchase quotas, Ku villagers were also required to pay the five-guarantee grain (*wubao liang*),⁹ education grain (*jiaoyu liang*) and favouring treatment grain (*youdai liang*). The money in the name was used for public works, for education and for different social services. For instance, the money of five-guarantee grain was allocated to the old peasants supported by the collective under the five guarantees program. According to Uncle Wen-de, the old peasants of "five

⁷. Basically it is a local policy. People can compare the practice in other areas of rural China. See Mueggler 1991 *Money, the Mountain and State Power*.

^{†8}. Some other villages in other parts of China also used the similar method. People interested in details can also read K. Li, 1986. *Chinese Peasants Life in Social Transformation -Case Study of Taoyuan Rural Community*. Hunan People Publisher; I. Thireau, 1988. "Recent Changes in a Guangdong Village." *Australian Journal of Chinese Affairs* 19: 241-268.

⁹. The childless and infirm elderly who are guaranteed food, clothing, medical care, housing and burial expenses by the government.

guarantee household" were all sent to the elderly house in *xiang*.¹⁰ Each household would receive a card issued by the local government, which proved that they had fulfilled their task (see Picture 4.1).

The other properties of the village also had been distributed to the villagers. Farm implements, from shoulder poles to winnowing baskets, were sold off to all of the families. Even the expensive ones, such as tractors, were sold to the villagers whose cash came from their overseas relatives. The villagers without overseas relatives were unable to afford the cost. The threshing workshop also was contracted out to the villagers. Furthermore, the production teams and brigades' fruit trees and fishponds were contracted out to the villages. The contracted households had to pay each year the sum they had bid, and in exchange they gained total right over the yields of the trees and ponds. In Ku Village, five public fishponds had been contracted out to the villagers from 500 yuan to 1,000 yuan per year. The total contract fee of all collective property is about 5,200 yuan per year. The expenditures of the villagers' committee mainly came from this fee. In sum, the village's assets were totally parceled out piece by piece.¹¹

Yao Zhifu, Zhong Guoshu

"Ba qionggeng, kai fulu; zai fugeng, jian jinku. Ruo yaofu, zhong guoshu; jia zhong baitiao shu, dengyu jian jinku. Fangqian fanghou duo zhongshu, dongnuan xialiang hao juzhu. Guoshu jiushi yaoqianshu, shui xian zhongguo shui xian fu."

(Pulling out the root of poor, opening the way of riches; growing the root of riches, establishing the storage of gold. Wanting to get rich, planting the fruit trees; family planting hundred trees, equal to establishing the storage of gold. Growing more trees before and behind the house, warm winter and cool summer being good for living. Fruit trees being money tree, who grows fruit first gets rich first.)

¹⁰. There are a variety of peasants' responsibilities to government in different places. According to the villagers, they think the burden is not too heavy when compared to other rural areas in other provinces. It is reported that the peasants are subsidizing the heavy burden of government. There are different items they have to afford. The heavy burdens have aroused the discontent and resistance of peasants. The central government has paid attention to this problem and advocated a reduction in the burden of peasants and prohibited the local government from collecting unreasonable taxes (Farmers Daily, 1993).

¹¹. It is reported by different scholars (e.g. Siu, 1989; Chan, Madsen & Unger, 1992; Hartford, 1985) that the responsibility system was not always done voluntarily. The reports reflect resistance not only from high-place cadres, reports also indicate that the resistance came from local villagers. Some peasants were not willing to divide up their teams' land and equipment and refused to go draw lots for the parcels of land. This situation is quite different to Ku Village.

The above is a popular doggerel in Meixian's rural area. It is talking about the advantages of growing fruit trees. It is said that this doggerel was written by Li Zan-fang, the former vice-chairman of the Agricultural Committee of Meixian. '*Yao zhifu, zhong guoshu*' (want to get rich, plant fruit tree) had been a slogan promoted by the Meixian government in the mid-1980s. Planting pomelo trees was regarded as a hope of the people in poor and difficult mountainous areas to walk out from poverty, in official term "*tuo ping*". After ten years, Shatian pomelo plantations now have become the dominant farming activity in the villages of Meixian. They also have become the main income source of the peasant households. But the Shatian pomelo plantation programme was not simply a state planned intervention, rather it was a complex process which involves the planned intervention by government and the local response of the villages. The transformation of the economic structure in Meixian was an outcome of the struggles and negotiations that took place between government, local cadres and villagers with differing and conflicting social interests.

According to my informants, the initiatives of planting Shatian pomelo came from 'below' rather than from 'above'. Before the policy of "opening out the wasteland and planting fruit tree" (*kaihuang zhongguo*) was formally carried out in 1985, the peasants of Mei county had widely planted the Shatian pomelo in some villages. I had a chance to interview secretary Li Zan-fang. He was one of the leaders who strongly advocated the development of Shatian pomelo. He told me many stories about Shatian pomelo.

Shatian pomelo was the original product of Shatian Village of Rongxian in Guangxi province. It was imported to Meixian by a villager of Bing Village in the 1910s. Before 1949, pomelo planting had been quite popular in Bing Village. In Mao's era, due to policy of "grain must be taken as the key link in agriculture", the pomelo planting was treated as the tail of capitalism (*ziben zhuyi weiba*) and was totally cut down.

In the late 1970s, there was a doggerel spreading among the villagers. That was "*zhenshi qi, zhen shigui, Songnan chu le ge Lidapao*" (It is so wonderful and so strange, a big gun Li occurred in Songnan town). Big gun (*da pao*) in Chinese means one who speaks boastfully or who noisily overstates things. Li Zan-fang was

gossiped as 'big gun' because he advocated growing fruit trees in Meixian. At the time, no cadres dared to think about formally developed fruit plantations in Meixian since it was still the age of '*yi lian wei gan*' (mono rice production). But in fact, in the 1970s, as Li told me, some villages secretly had carried out their sideline activities. The local cadres kept one eye closed and one eye opened, and hid the fact from the above. Yanyang town was the first town in Meixian re-planting Shatian pomelo in 1973. The pomelo planting activity brought the improvement in living standards of the Yanyang peasants. The experience of Yanyang told Secretary Li that to bring Meixian to riches, the only way was to develop fruit plantation. In 1974, when he was the leader of Yaoshang commune, he encouraged the brigade to develop Shatian pomelo as a sideline activity. He said, "Depending on rice jar to exchange oil and salt, is just like paring the iron from the head of needle: very limited." That meant that depending on the rice production could not solve the problem of rural poverty. So he bought the fruit saplings from Guangzhou for Yaoshan Commune. He also invited the fruit farmers from Guangzhou to give the lesson to the villagers in Yaoshan. Because of the increase of Yaoshan's income, suddenly, Yaoshan became well known in Meixian. But as they said, "*ren pa chuming, zhu pa fei*" (men are afraid of becoming famous, pigs are afraid of becoming fat). His idea was seriously criticized by his supervisor. He was very angry and came to see his supervisor. He argued: "My heart was so painful when I saw the villagers such poor. So I boldly encouraged them to grow fruit to supplement the oil and salt money (*you yan qian*). What's wrong with that?" In the end, he was ousted from his position and in 1978 he was sent to the poorest commune -- Songnan.

The bad name of Songnan was 'Qiong nan'. Qiong in Chinese means 'poor'. In the collective era, the average income of each villagers was lower than 70 yuan. How to help 'Qiong nan' becoming 'Fu nan' was the first question facing Li. He brought his experience of Yaoshan to Songnan. He called a meeting of village cadres at an orange garden in Changshan. He showed the fruit trees to the village cadres from other villages and said, "In this garden, there are about 500 orange trees. Those who contracted the garden and put some capital into it, they could easily become *wanyuanfu* (Ten thousand yuan households). Do you think it is worthwhile?" Some village cadres were encouraged by Li and started the fruit plantation in their villages,

and they got very good results. For example, Liao Zhi-liang, a village in Dahuang brigade, got 18,000 yuan in 1985.

Li's name became more and more well known in Meixian, but some people still doubted that the feasibility of his idea of developing fruit plantations. So someone gave him a bad name, 'big gun Li'. In a meeting at county level, in front of other officials, Li stood out and defended himself:

People said I am Big Gun Li. I think there are two kind of big guns. The first is *chedapao*, this kind of big gun is untrue, empty, and hollow. I am not gonna to be this kind since it will bring calamity to the country and the people. The other kind is *zhen dapao* which is concrete and active, it can blow open the door of getting riches. I don't mind being this kind since it benefits to the country and the people.

When some officials challenged his idea, he very angrily said: "Big gun or not a big gun, making an on-the-spot investigation will prove it. If you don't believe it, please walk to Liao Zhi-liang's place with your 'noble feet' and look around." When the villagers heard the news that Li was attacked by the government, they felt this was unfair. Liao Zhi-liang even made a doggerel to support him. That was "*Li shuji da bu da pao, qie dao wo jia jian cheng xiao*" (Whether secretary Li is a big gun or not, please come to my house and see the result). The doggerel was sung and spread from one village to another. The leaders of county government also heard the song.

In the rural reform of the 80s, under the banner of socialist market economy, the Meixian government enthusiastically developed the agricultural-commodity economy. The local newspapers and official publications provided the official version of the development strategy in Meixian:

In the process of developing the commodity economy, it is necessary to strengthen the cadres and masses' knowledge of the route and direction of the Third Plenum of the 11th Central Committee of the Communist Party. It is also necessary to destroy the subsistent petty production ideology and establish the value of socialist commodity production.... We had to help the peasant form the concept of investment, encourage the peasant to audaciously expand their reproductive investment... We also have to help the peasant accept the idea of efficiency, market value and the idea of competition (Mei Jiang Daily, 26th January 1988).

The socialist agriculture is not based on the petty peasant economy, but on the development of commodity production.... To break away from

the poverty, the mountainous region has to commercialize the local economy (Liu, etc. 1992).

The county government was eager to find a way out poverty for Meixian. After a serious debate in a meeting at county level, the government finally decided to adopt Li's idea of developing fruit plantations in Meixian. Pomelo was chosen as the *longtou* (dragon head, i.e. major) commercial produce, which was promoted to grow in large scale. In 1986, Meixian was designated as the country's major commercial pomelo-producing base by the provincial government. It was planned that the acreage growing Shatian pomelo would be expanded to 6,666 hectares in 1987 with government loans. The aim was to increase to more than 10,000 hectares during the Seventh Five-Year Plan period.

The policy of developing Shatian pomelo plantations was passed to the villages level-by-level. According to secretary Li, at first some of the villagers and grassroots cadres were unwilling to plant the Shatian pomelo because they worried about the market and wonder whether the trees would bear fruit. No one wanted to take the risk of planting pomelo because of their experiences in the Maoist past. So they waited and saw what happened to the other households. When the programme encountered the resistance of the villagers, the socialist government adopted the method of persuasion and compulsory means to impose this policy on the villagers. The policy of "who reclaims the wasteland, owns the land" was carried out for giving villagers incentive to grow pomelo. Villagers who planted one sapling would also be subsidized four or five *jiao*. The credit cooperative also provided low interest loans to the villagers to purchase the fertilizer, saplings and other resources. The village cadres had to play the leading role and took the lead to grow the Shatian pomelo. Each team also had to fulfill the quota of plantation. If any teams failed to fulfill the target, the village leaders would be punished with the deduction of bonuses. To enhance the confidence of peasants and grassroots cadres, secretary Li organized the villagers to visit the planting situation of a model village in Yanyang town. There, the villagers saw the trees bearing full fruit. The trip strengthened the confidence of the villagers. Li stated: "Village watch village, household watch household, masses watch cadres. Villagers strive for direct observation. If you can show them a good model, they will follow."

Village party secretary, Song-sheng, described the similar situation in Ku Village:

When the policy was transmitted to the village in 1981, the villagers responded coldly because they couldn't be assured that planting pomelo could earn money. We had to take the risk first. In 1984 or 1985, we got the first good harvest. Then the upper government official visited our village and appreciated our result.

Our slogan was "want to become rich, plant the fruit pomelo" (*yaozhifu, zhongguoshu*). Our villagers were very "clever"; from that time on, more and more villagers planted Shatian pomelo.

Uncle Nian-hua presented the similar story to me.

At the beginning, even if you freely sent the sapling to the household, no one picked it up because no one knew whether the tree could bear fruit. So the government had to subsidize the villagers. If you plant one sapling, you would be subsidized five jiao and a half jin fertilizer. The Kus were as timid as mice. Only a small group dared to try. In the early 1980s, when the policy came down, we had to persuade them about planting pomelo household by household.

The statistical data shows the income of peasants of Mei county increased quickly in these sixteen years. In the Table 4.2, we can find the average income of Songnan sharply increased from 62 *yuan* in 1980 to 1230.3 *yuan* in 1992, increasing nineteen times. Compared to the average income of Songnan township, Xiaohuang was higher, which was 1565 *yuan* in 1992. Compared to the whole Xiaohuang Administrative District, the average income of Ku Village was even higher, which was 2000 *yuan* in 1992 (Mei County Agricultural Committee, 1992). In 1995, the average income of Meixian's rural population had reached 2,800 *yuan*.

Table 4.2. Average Income in Different Townships of Mei County from 1980-92 (unit: *yuan*)

Commune	1980	1981	1984	1989	1991	1992
Chengdong	64.4	91	386.0	773	925	1141
Chengbei	96.6	128.9	355.5	/	/	/
Chengjiang	103.3	110.9	435.5	758	1038	1323
Meijiang	67.4	103.8	404.1	/	/	/
Shishan	83.6	117.5	506.6	874	916	1178
Meixi	81.1	110.5	365.7	608	794	985
Shikang	56.2	69	236.0	586	721	882
Shuiku	61.7	76	/	/	/	/
Daping	88.5	96.9	334.6	735	961	1334
Nankou	86.1	89.1	365.5	676	902	1232.2
Yaoshang	52	66.6	264.6	574	734	1008
Hesi	75.2	96.9	332.0	676	888	1107.3
Jingyi	88.6	88.7	251.7	493	653	905
Fangjiang	67.2	95.8	282.4	563	783	1154

Shuiche	67.3	102.9	321.7	573	854	1068
Changsha	90.6	94.1	356.0	/	/	/
Xiyang	87	99.8	343.0	569	780	1063
Baigong	93.6	107.2	385.0	660	951	1216
Bicun	105.6	112.3	349.1	804	1001	1228
Yanyang	112.9	125.6	515.5	873	1324	1630
Songbei	81.5	117.3	366.0	664	952	1232.3
Songdong	72.8	88.0	340.4	612	931	1160
*Songnan	62.0	94.2	376.2	702	966	1230
Songyuan	60.6	91.6	244.0	517	781	988
Longwen	86	93.4	340.0	716	936	1201
Taorao	81	116.2	374.0	620	863	1081
Baidu	70.7	101.7	401.6	728	1036	1318
Fuda	85.5	96.7	399.2	743	968	1210
Songkoutown	49.3	60.8	254.4	579	852	1107.1
Meinan	64.7	76.3	312.3	592	861	1089
Average of Meixian	78.7	100.2	357.9	668	916	1178

Source: Mei County Statistic Bureau, 1982. *Agricultural Statistic Data of all Communes in 1981*. [meixian yijiubayi nian gegongshe nongye tongji ziliao]; *Agricultural Economic Productivity Distribution Statistical Report in 1985 & 1992*. [yijiubawu he yijiujiusan nian nongye jingji shouyi fengpei tongji baobiao]

There was another indicator of the importance of pomelo planting in Mei county. In Table 4.3, the data shows that the area of pomelo planting increased from 875 *mu* in 1978 to 112,279 *mu* in 1991. The income of fruit occupied 13.1% of total income of Mei county in 1992. In Songnan township, the income of fruit occupied about 61% of its total income and the area of fruit increased from 833 *mu* in 1986 to 3385 *mu* in 1989 (Mei County Statistic Bureau, 1992).

Table 4.3. The Area and Production of Shatian Pomelo in Mei County. (Selected Years).

	1949	1957	1978	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991
Area (mu)	530	1005	875	19725	63945	88867	96469	88767	104535	112279
Total Production (tons)	362	599	80	814	1946	2924	4312	5485	16594	31000

Source: Liu et.al, 1992. *The Rich Road of Mei County* [Meixian zhifu zhi ru]. Beijing: Red Flag Press. Wen & Chen et.al, 1992. *The Shatian Pomelo of Mei County* [Meixian Shatian You]. Guangzhou: The University of South China Polytechnic Press.

In Ku Village, the total income of the individual household was also striking. Last year, according to my own small survey, there were 57.7% of 40 households getting total income more than 10,000 yuan in 1995 (see Table 4.4). The villagers attributed the sharp increase of income to the pomelo planting. They often told me that the Shatian pomelo brought them riches.

Table. 4.4. Total income of individual household in Ku Village, 1995 (total 40)

Income	Frequency	Percentage
under 5000	4	10
5000 to 10000	10	25
11000 to 15000	11	27.5
16000 to 20000	10	25
21000 to 25000	1	2.5
26000 to 30000	1	2.5
above 30000	3	7.5

source: my own survey

Shatian pomelo production partially met the villagers' desire to improve their material well-being. Some of them were able to purchase the same luxurious goods as urban citizens. In Ku Village, there were 20 households that had their own motorcycles; two households with tractors; 28 households with their own televisions; 21 with radios; and three households with washing machines. In the village, I found that there were 35 (57.4%) households that had built new houses since the 80s. "The new house is being built by Shatian pomelo" was a popular saying in the village. Some of the young villagers imitated the interior decoration of urban houses, with sofas, chandeliers, new style cupboards, and other furnishings.

In a material sense, the villagers obtained a lot of improvement in their life. They were proud of it. To them, it was their own effort. But to the government, it was due to rural reform and the correct policy of the government. In the interviews with cadres and villagers, I heard two different voices. They both constructed their stories based on their respective interests. To me, whoever made the rural development seemed not such important. But to the villagers, this is an important question since it related to the taxation of pomelo. In Chapter 6, I will disclose how the villagers and the cadres made their story to justify their action in the issue of taxation.

4.4. Villagers' Economic Practices in Everyday Life

The 'state-made' development programmes or economic models have changed the local economy from rice production to cash crop plantation and also incorporated it into the market economy -- in the name of socialism. However, if we can take

villagers' everyday practices more seriously into account, we will find the villagers still maintain their own conception of economy which is revealed in their daily life practices. They have a different logic of economy which is quite divergent from the official notion of market economy. It comprised of their beliefs and morality, their conception of land, profits, and labour, their perception of *guanxi* and *zeren*. I do not intend to exaggerate that shifting from rice production to pomelo plantation had no effect on the villager's economic practices and conception, but they were not simply passive recipients of intervention of the state, but active participants who processed information and strategies in dealing with the state policy through making them something quite different from what the policy makers had in mind, and adapting it to their own interests as well as their own ways of life.

Land and Natural Resource for Survival

Based on Polanyi's interpretation, to a formal economist, value is determined by scarcity and use is made of the concepts of supply and demand, price, capital, and other words like profit, maximizing and so on which represent tools of economic inquiry. Land is treated by economist as a resource and capital factor which is to invested and reinvested for profit (Polanyi, 1949, 1959). To Ku villagers, land was the central resource which was the root of their livelihood. From generation to generation, they depended on land for survival. Their life was bound up with the soil. In their everyday conversation, they shared with me their view of land. I remembered that Uncle Jin said "having a piece of land, you can survive in any condition." Aunt Lan also made a metaphor of land as such: "What do farmers rely on? A piece of land and two hands. Land is like the milk, we are like the baby; without milk we cannot survive." The barren and sterile land was analogized as '*meinai de ma*' (the mother without milk) or '*yingyang buliang*' (the mother lacking nutrient). I think these metaphors, made by a woman, to some sense revealed their *guanxi* with land. People in Ku Village have a deep sentiment and respect to land. They treat land as their mother and themselves as children. Mother feeds the children and the children will feed their mother in return when they grow up. It is a mutual obligation. Land provides food to them, and in return it is their *zeren* to maintain the fertility of land. Their *guanxi* with land is moral rather than instrumental; in other words, land is for

survival, but not for profit maximization. In the village, there was a custom of worshipping *tudigong* (earth god). On the side of field, on the hill, under the tree, they set the shrine of *tudigong*. They offered them sacrifices just as offering to ancestors. They humanized the land rather than treated it only as material or means of production.

Land provided a sense of security to the villagers. Although under the influence of industrialization, many young villagers left their land and entered into factories, their life was bound up with the land as before. The job insecurity and high pressure alienated them from city life. The *hukou* system also made it difficult for them to become real urban residents. Most of them knew that the city was only a temporary place to stay. They made money in factories only for building new houses in the village. After several years, most of them returned to their homeland and rebound themselves to the soil. Jing, Li, Liao-ma and other young villagers were all the cases. To them, factories were not their eternal *guisu* (home to return to). I have interviewed some of them. Let us hear what they said.

Jing: It is meaningless to work in a factory. There is no security. I entered a factory only because I wanted to see the world and enrich my experience. I returned home because my root is here. I feel the soil gives me security.

Li: Comparing my life in factory, I prefer the life in village. I work freely. Having a piece of land, I will not die.

Liaoma: This is my home. I feel my affection is deeper to the land than to the machine in factory.

Of course not all young villagers thought this way. In Ku Village, Uncle Man's three sons did not want to return to the village. They identified themselves as urbanites. Uncle Man's youngest son told me, "the village is so backward (*luohou*), I cannot get used to staying in the village any more."

Because the villagers treated land as their means of survival rather than capital for accumulation or making profit, the Ku villagers did not try to control land as much as possible. People controlling extra land would be criticized or gossiped as '*shengren ba shidi*' (the live man occupies the dead land, i.e. greedy). Their area of land was often determined and correlated to the number of family members and household labour forces. In Table 4.5, we can find that most of households only have 3.1 to 4 mu in contracted land and 2.1 to 3 mu in private plot.

Table 4.5. The Land Area and Village Household

Land Area	Number of Households (total: 45)	
	Contracted Field	Private Plot
no land	2	11
Less than 1 mu	7	5
1 to 2 mu	6	9
2.1 to 3 mu	7	12
3.1 to 4 mu	16	2
4.1 to 5 mu	5	1
5.1 to 6 mu	1	/
6.1 to 7 mu	/	1
7.1 to 8 mu	/	/
more than 8 mu	1	4

Sources: my own survey.

As a person who came from urban and capitalist society, at first I really could not understand why some villagers in Ku Village disposed of or decreased the amount of land. Land was one kind of scarcity which could make high profit in city. But villagers, like Uncle Si, had transferred the contracted land to other households who had sufficient labours. The new landholder took up the *zeren* to pay the agricultural tax for Uncle Si. One day when I was walking with Uncle Si along the small path in the village, I asked him why he was so nice to transfer his land to other households without any reputation. He laughed and said: "My brother's son, I know what you mean. But don't be foolish, as the saying goes, 'you brought nothing to this world when you was born, and you would not bring anything back when you died' (*sheng bu dailai, si bu daiqu*)."

Brother Kan also lent out two pieces of land to a couple coming from Jiangxi province without charging rent. As I knew, the five guarantee households and the households -- just having one or two old family members -- which, lacking of labour forces, also transferred their land to other households. And the new holders only had to pay the tax of the contracted land and afford the living expenses of those old people. The money the new holders paid was not our concept of rent or profit. The underlying idea was the relationship of reciprocity and *zeren* among the kinship group, but not market relations and profit maximization. Because of that, there was no any formal contract to bind their *zeren* and land giving-returning. They made an oral promise based on mutual trust. To this day, there are still no conflicts between the villagers regarding the land exchange.

In Ku Village, there are four kinds of land -- wet fields, dry land, private plot and wasteland. To the villagers, wet fields and dry land belonged to individual households after dividing the land to the household. To the old villagers, they often perceived this only as the returning the land, which was seized by the Communist government during collectivization. There was a severe discrepancy in interpretation of land ownership between the state and the villagers, which caused conflicts in land taxation during 1985 (I will discuss it in detail in Chapter 6). To them, wasteland and other natural resources like rivers and forests were freely available for use and everyone had rights of access to it. They adopted the principle of 'first come, first serve'. While the land was being used, one had exclusive right to it. The forest was also an integral part of their subsistent base. Although the forest had been defined as the state's property in terms of forest law¹², to the villagers, the forest was a natural resource which belonged to nobody. They collected the firewood in the forest as usual. The villagers did not know when they began this practice because collecting firewood was 'as natural as eating and shitting'.

It was often reported by the Chinese press that there was serious poaching in the state's forest area. The government had ordered the concerned department to punish poachers severely. In Ku Village, poaching in 'state's forest' area was also serious. As the wood could be sold a high price in market, the young villagers often felled the trees in back mountains of the village. According to Brother San, a young villager, one cubic meter of wood could sell for about 300 yuan. As it was strictly prohibited by government, they usually took action at dusk and late at night. But actually, all the villagers, even the village cadres, knew they were felling trees at the back mountain. But poaching in villagers' mind was not a crime since they actually did not think the forest was state's property; rather, it was only part of natural resources and cutting down the trees was only part of their traditional practices. But now the state redefined the forest as government property and then imposed a whole series of 'regulations and law' to the rural society. Villagers practicing their routine life now suddenly were committing what Michel Foucault called "state created

12. I will discuss the villagers' poaching in Ku Village in detail in coming chapter. In the behaviour of poaching, we can find the battle of knowledge between peasant society and the state.

crime". In this sense, I agree with E. P. Thompson (1991) that the most important fact about poaching is that:

The activity itself was part of the traditional subsistence routine of the rural population, an activity embedded in customary rights. Poaching as crime, therefore, entails less a change of behaviour than a shift in the law of property relations. It is the state and its law which suddenly transforms their subsistence routines into everyday forms of resistance (Thompson in Scott, 1989:9).

The river to Ku villagers also had special meaning, because it was also the source of their life. It brought up the Ku villagers from generation to generation. The Ku villagers related the river to the *fengshui* (geomagnetic omen) of Ku Village. *Fengshui* to Ku villagers was very essential important because it would affect the continuity of their kin line. Following is a short dialogue between Brother Li and me at the hillside.

Li: Brother Hok-Bin, look at the river.

Hok-Bin: What's different?

Li: My father told me that the river is the root of our fengshui. Can you see that the range of mountains surrounding Ku Village is like an ancient folding chair, and the stream running across the village is like a jade waistband of traditional officials?

Hok-Bin: It looks like what you said. But what is the relation to fengshui?

Li: This natural geography brings our village good fengshui. The teacher of fengshui told us that this kind of fengshui makes many descendants obtain high honours in education and become officials. The founder of our village was the successful candidate in the highest imperial examination (Jinshi) of Ming Dynasty.

I repeatedly heard the same story from other older villagers. Through *fengshui* I think we can in some sense grasp the villagers' cosmology which reveals their view of nature as an organic world. *Fengshui* stands for the power of natural environment. To them, violating the *guanxi* with the natural environment will bring bad fortune. Apart from the religious meaning, the small river closely influences their everyday life. In Ku Village, the river provides the drinking water for the villagers. The river also provides irrigation for the farming. Every day and every year, the women in the village washed their food and clothes in the river. In leisure time, people also fish and swim in the river. So the river is part of their life. But after the construction of the dam for the hydroelectric power station, there was a great impact on their life. In a later chapter, I will explain the conflict between the hydroelectric power station and

Ku Village on the issue of electric fees, through which we can understand the villagers' view of the river and their relationship with the river. After the introduction of the pomelo plantation, people increasingly used the chemical fertilizer and pesticides in production which had polluted the water. The villagers no longer got the water from the river for drinking. The people in village also told me that swimming in river would cause their skin to itch. It was the cost they had to pay for making money. But in recent years, some villagers consciously and actively decreased using chemical fertilizer and pesticides for the protection of the environment. They bought the chicken feces from the chicken farm instead of using chemical fertilizer. I think the idea came from their indigenous idea of *guanxi* between nature and human beings which is rooted in their living experience, rather than the modern concept of environmentalism.

Labour without Wages

Labour in Ku Village can be divided into three types. The most important one is the family labour or self-employed labour; the second type is the exchange labour; the third type is the hired labour. In Ku Village, the family is the basic unit of production and consumption. Before the introduction of pomelo plantations, village households employed no hired wage labour and they depended solely on the work of their own family members. In harvest, all the family members had to participate into the collection except the children and the elders. In harvest season, most of the village households chose the day of collection of pomelo on Sunday because their family members who were away, studying in secondary school or college, would return for assistance. The married daughters also came home to help the harvest. Some daughters also came home accompanied by her husband and his family members. All these labours are non-wage labour.

Wage is an important concept in the capitalist economy. The essential characteristic of capitalist enterprise is that they operate with hired workers in order to earn profit. However, in the villagers' conception of economy, they had no idea of wages for individual family members. We inevitably had to take the entire family household as a single economic unit. Because of the absence of wages, other concepts like net gain, rent and interest on capital, could not work out for peasant

farms. In my small survey in Ku Village, the result showed me that the villagers could not divide clearly the income of an individual item of production. They could only tell me a single return based on their annual product minus their output such as the seed, fertilizer, pesticide and so on. For them, there were neither wages nor net profits because the family members knew roughly how many days they had worked. By its nature, their return was unique, indivisible and undifferentiated. In other words, it could not be broken down into wage and other factor payment.

In the harvest season, exchanging the labour between households was a popular practice in Ku Village. The exchange labour could not be calculated in wages. It was based on the principle of reciprocity such as mutual aid, obligation and so on. To most villagers, the exchange of labour was one of the important ways for them to maintain and promote their *guanxi* and *ganqing* with other family. Therefore, even if a household harboured sufficient labour, they still exchanged their labour. Of course, some villagers' motivation for obtaining the labour assistance was only for rapidly harvesting a ripened crop. Last year when I was staying in the village, I noticed most village households exchanged their labour with other households in the harvest of Shatian pomelo and in the spring ploughing. They cooperated in a proper way (see Picture 4.2). In the grove of pomelo tree, there was lots of laughing: some were working, some were sharing jokes with each other; some were sharing their news of harvest or other households' matter; some were just engaging in a small talk; some were also making fun of each other. They really enjoyed their work. They did not intend to make accurate calculations of how many tasks the exchanged labourers had done or how much effort they had made. They only roughly knew the number of days they would exchange. Of course, it cannot made sense from the logic of wage.

After the pomelo plantation becoming the dominant activity, hired wage labour had occurred in Ku Village. But it would be a mistake to think that there was a new mode of production accompanying the new production relationship in Ku Village, because the operational logic was still the same as the other form of labour that aimed at securing the family's needs rather than making profit. In Ku Village, the households hired the outside labour for a short term. Only two households employed labour longer than one month. Brother Kan employed two long-term labourers. Brother Xin employed three short-term labourers for less than half year. All the hired

labour came from other provinces such as Jiangxi and Fujian. They set the payment not on the basis of maximizing profit, but on the basis of giving a reasonable payment. Brother Kan paid his hired labourers three hundreds remimbi per month including three meals. Brother Kan told me:

I think my payment is quite reasonable. It is higher than the salary of some workers in the factory. Compared to other villages, my payment to my labour is acceptable. We do things in all fairness. Everyday I also do as much in the field as my hired labourers do.

In Ku Village, the social relationship bound the people and placed different social and moral demands on its members. They could not set the price of labour for their own sake of interest without considering the public opinion of the other villagers. As I knew, people in the village would like to compare with each other. When Brother Xin set the wage for his labours, he took Brother Kan's payment as reference. He also paid the same price to his hired labour. He could not arbitrarily minimize the price as he wanted. As Brother Xin said, "I will not lose our family's face. They pay how much, I will pay the same. I don't want others to look down us." "Face" to Chinese is so important, and it is embedded in social relationships and is emotionally tied to personal obligations as defined by those relationships. Whoever fails to fulfill *zeren* and social demands will think that they lost 'face' for their family. Adopting the view of maximizing the profit to understand the hired labour in Ku Village will cause one to misconstrue its underlying meaning.

The Labour- Family Demand Balance Principle

In the local newspaper, the official voice on development is always to promote the large-scale production in agriculture. The government encourage the villagers to expand their pomelo plantations to the scale of manors. This is based on the logic of economy of large-scale in terms of maximizing and profit. At the first stage of rural reform, almost all the villagers were subject to the desire for the maximization of wealth. However, the uncertainty and fluctuation of market made many of the villagers seriously lost in pomelo investment in recent years. Some of the villagers had readjusted their strategy of investment. Interviewing with the villagers, many of them told me that subsistent security is more important than maximization of profit.

Broadly speaking, their conception of subsistence is defined by the labour-consumer balance.

The villagers did not blindly expand their production beyond their ability of control; in other words, the scale of production of each village household was greatly limited by the number of their family labourers and its product, but not the capital. The amount of labour product was mainly determined by the size and the composition of the working family, and the number of its member capable of work. It was also determined by the productivity of each labour unit, the degree of labour effort and the degree of self-exploitation.¹³ The degree of labour effort and the degree of self-exploitation was determined by a peculiar equilibrium between family demand satisfaction and the drudgery of labour.¹⁴

The family demand is still greatly influenced by the family cycle. The family at different stages had its different size and composition which will determine its demands. Brother Xin shared with me his experience as father, husband and head of family.

Now I am the head of family. My father asked me to determine everything of our family. I find now I have to put many things into consideration such as my son's milk, my brother's marriage, and my family's salt, sugar, rice, oil and so on. I know I have to work harder than before. So I do anything I can, like carrying the sand and cement with my tractor for other people. I also planted 100 more pomelo trees this year. You know, my kid's expenditure is more than an adult. And my brother is at the time of marriage. I think I have to build a new house for him.

At this stage, Brother Xin's family had two full labourers (he and his brother), three half labourers (his parents and his wife) and two non-labourers (his son and daughter).

¹³. The concept of 'degree of self exploitation' is drawn from Chayanov (1986). The extent to which the members of the family actually work under given conditions he called the degree of self-exploitation of family labour.

¹⁴. The labour-consumer balance between the satisfaction of family needs and the drudgery of labour is the central concept of Chayanov's theory of peasant economy (Chayanov, 1986). According to my observation and conversation with the villagers, I found Chayanov's theory is still valid. As Chayanov stated: "As long as the equilibrium is not reached between the elements being evaluated (i.e., the drudgery of the work is subjectively estimated as lower than the significance of the needs for whose satisfaction the labor is endured), the family, working without paid labour, has every cause to continue its economic activity. As soon as this equilibrium point is reached, however, continuing to work becomes pointless, as any further labour expenditure becomes harder for the peasant or artisan to endure than is foregoing its economic effects." (Chayanov, 1986:6).

So the degree of self-exploitation in his family was higher than other families. He had to work harder and longer to meet the increasing family expenditure.

Some households decided to decrease their scale of production after their children left the village for study or marriage. For example, Uncle Xiang's family had planted about 100 trees of pomelo. After his sons left the village and entered into colleges in Guangzhou city, he sold the trees to other households and kept only 60 to 70 trees for himself. Uncle Si only kept the number of his trees around 35 because all his sons and daughters had left the village. Uncle Bi expanded his production after his son, Brother Li, returned to the village from the factory in the Pearl River Delta (PRD). The market situation and natural disasters also determined their degree of self-exploitation. In recent years, the market price of Shatian pomelo was constant and declined. For coping with the inflation and maintaining the family standard of living, some Ku Villagers planted more pomelo trees and work longer and harder hours. Some family restrained their consumption demand a bit, e.g. delaying to buy a colour TV. However, I want to say that villagers will self-exploit and put forth greater efforts only if they have reason to believe it will increase their output which could be devoted to greater family consumption or /and to enlarged investment in the farm, and vice versa. For example, Brother Xin time and again told me that, "If I cannot get any results from my investment, I would feel very meaningless (*meiyisi*) and lackadaisical (*meijing*). I would not do any more investment."

In addition to family cycles, the family demand was also socially constructed. Mass media was one of the important tools in constructing people's desire, taste and then demand. After the delimitation of rural-urban migration and the introduction of radio and TV to rural society, people in the village could access the information from the outside world easily. They compared their life with that of urban citizens, with foreign countries, with other villages, and with the fellow villagers. The chasm created mixed feelings of Ku villagers. When they compared themselves with the poor villages, they felt proud and superior; when compared themselves with richer areas, in material sense, the Ku villagers felt insufficient and inferior. The social lack seduced their desire. Their demands were no longer limited only to the fulfillment of basic necessity. They began to think about improving their living standard or having a comfortable life like urban citizens. Among the villagers, there are diverse views

on the comfortable life which influenced the formation of their family demands. To Uncle Si, food was more important than a TV, a new house and other things. He taught his philosophy to me:

What do we pursue in our life? Nothing is more important than food and drink. If I have cash, I will not spend it on constructing a new house like they (other villagers) do. I will spend it on food and drink -- at least it is good for health. I don't know why they are so foolish. All of this cannot be brought away after we die.

To some villagers, building a new house was their most important family demand. They worked hard and made money for building a two-storey house. Building a new house was part of parent's *zeren* for their son. As Uncle Jiong stated, "My last will was to build two new house and get wives for my sons. After that, I have fulfilled my obligation." To other villagers, education of children was the most important demand. They worked very hard for the sake of supporting their children studying in universities and colleges. In Table 4.6, we can find that the expenditure on education occupied a large percentage of family income.

Table 4.6. Villagers' Expenditure in Education

	Number of Households (total: 45)
no expenditure on education	24
less than 500 yuan	1
510 to 1000 yuan	2
1100 to 1500 yuan	4
1600 to 2000 yuan	2
2100 to 2500 yuan	1
2600 to 3000 yuan	1
3100 to 3500 yuan	1
more than 3500 yuan	4
university expenditure	5

Source: my own survey.

To the younger villagers, their demand satisfaction was quite different. Brother Mei told me his plan as such:

In our village, almost all the households have constructed their new "houses". Most of the households have television, motorcycle.... I think I cannot be looked down on by others; I will also buy a motorcycle this year.

In sum, the family demand of the villagers is never fixed, i.e. it is constituted by many different factors. The relationship between labour and family demand is dialectic. The family demand will determine the degree of labour exploitation; on the other hand, the number of labourers will limit the family demand in return. Of course, I cannot say that this principle of labour-family balance applies to every villagers. Some village households in Ku Village still continue to take risk of expanding their production for maximization of profit.

Time Spending of the Villagers

In Ku Village, people's time is mainly spent on the pomelo plantation. Broadly speaking, the activities in the planting cycle of Shatian pomelo includes the sapling planting, turning up the soil, fertilizing, artificial pollination, weeding, eliminating the insects, irrigation and harvesting. The villagers' conception of time is quite different from urban citizens. They seldom use the *yangli* (Western calendar) to calculate their year cycle. *Yinli* or *nongli* (Chinese calendar) is mainly adopted to plan their farming activities. In daily life, they only calculate the day by using the cycle of the periodic market. For convenience, I broadly transfer *yinli* to *yangli* to present their work cycle in a year.

January is the slash season of the villagers. The work they mainly to do is fertilizing and spraying pesticide. In February, the main task of the villagers is to take care of the flower buds. The sapling is sometimes planted in this month because the rainfall is concentrated. In March, when the flowers open, the villagers have to keep the good flowers and pluck the small flowers off. Then they will do the artificial pollination. Artificial pollination requires much time and labour, so this is a busy season for the villagers. According to the villagers, artificial pollination is very important because it will affect the amount of the fruit. At this stage, they also have to eliminate the insects and protect the flowers. In April, the trees begin to bear fruit. The villagers' main task is to take care of the infant fruit and prevent insects and disease. The task in May is similar to April. At this stage, the fruit grows up quickly. In June, the fruit become bigger, but they easily get diseased because the rainfall concentrates in this season. Villagers have to apply fertilizer and spray the pesticide to the pomelo trees. They also have to cut down some of the branches and leaves for

the circulation of the air. The sick fruits will be cut off. In July, the fruits grow up quickly. The important task is to keep humidity in the soil for maintaining the juiciness of fruits. The irrigation of the pomelo mainly depends on the rainfall. In the dry season (mainly concentrated in July, April and September), the villagers often pump the water from the river in the village. So all the households in Ku Village have electric pumps. August and September are the hottest months, villagers have to prevent the heatstroke and fever of the fruits. So they can only spray the water in the early morning. They keep up with the application of fertilizer and pesticide as usual, but they reduce the quantity of the fertilizers and pesticide for keeping the sweetness of the fruits.

In October, the fruit gradually become mature (see Picture 4.3). It is the important month of the villagers. Any natural disaster like typhoon will destroy their harvest. So there is still great uncertainty among the villagers; they said, "We won't have a good sleep before the pomelo is sold." "Living off nature" is the rule of agriculture. In October of 1993, when I was staying in the village, it was raining everyday. The peasants worried very much about the harvest because before the harvest, the pomelo tree cannot absorb too much water, or the fruit will become rotten. Everyday, they discussed the situation of the pomelo tree. Each household had different degrees of lost harvest. From late October to early November is the harvest period. They visited the pomelo trees twice per day. Some villagers even set up beds under the pomelo trees because the fruits sometimes were stolen by other villagers or outsiders. Most of Ku villagers collected the pomelo after Mid-Autumn festival. They immersed the fruit with the preservative immediately to prevent the loss of moisture and the rotting of the fruits. The trading of Shatian pomelo is a face-to-face transaction process. Town merchants come to the village, and directly collect the fruits from the peasant households for resale or export. After getting an agreement on price, the buyers pay immediately and transport the pomelo away (see Picture 4.4). If the villagers cannot sell out the fruit, they have to package the fruit with the plastic preserving bag and store it until they can get a good price (see Picture 4.5). There is some fluctuation of the purchasing price of Shatian pomelo in these several years. From 1992 to 1995, the price had little increase. In 1992, the purchasing price was about 1.2 yuan to 1.3 yuan per jin; in 1994, the average purchasing price was about

1.8 to 2 yuan per jin; in 1995, the price decreased to 1.5 to 1.8 yuan per jin. The Ku villager's production of pomelo for 1995 is summarized in Table 4.7.

Table 4.7. The Production of Shatian Pomelo in Ku Village in 1995. (unit: jin)

	No. of Households	Percentage
No Production	6	13.3
Less than 5000 or equal	14	31.1
5100 to 6000	4	8.9
6100 to 7000	2	4.4
7100 to 8000	2	4.4
8100 to 9000	4	8.9
9100 to 10000	4	8.9
more than or equal to 11000	9	20

source: my own survey.

Most villagers did not dare to take the risk of storing the fruit and waiting for a good price. Uncle Chang expressed his thinking:

Villagers do not dare to take risks, as you know; we have worked hard for a year. Although the fruit has been collected, if the money is not in our pocket, we don't set our mind at rest. While the pomelo is still stored at home, my wife cannot get to sleep. But some villagers dare to store the pomelo and wait for the good price. In our village, someone sell 1.8-2.2 yuan per jin. In Chinese New Year, they even sell 3.3 yuan per jin.

In November and December, after the collection of the fruit, the villagers begin to turn up the soil and spread the fertilizer on the soil. They also cut the old branches and clear the weeds. They called this procedure as *qingyuan* (clear the garden). Fertilizing, eliminating the insects, irrigating and weeding is done throughout year.

Basically, pomelo planting is not a time and labour intensive production. One person can manage 30 to 40 trees. In the slash season, two or three family members are quite enough in the planting process. So the pomelo plantation releases more labour from the planting process and allows people to engage in other sideline activities such as trading or participating into industry.

To me as an urbanite, a whole day working or a whole week working is quite normal. But time to the villagers is not just for work, but also for leisure. Living in the village, every day I found that they spent much of their time in leisure. Everyday the adults work between eight to eleven o'clock in morning. After lunch, some villagers like to join together and have a chat or play Chinese cards. Some like to take a nap until two or three o'clock. They often work again after three o'clock and go home before six o'clock. In summer and winter, they work even shorter. Of course, in harvest season, they will work longer. On rainy days, they often stop their work and rest the whole day. Most of time, the men just work half a day and the women work the whole day. When friends or relatives are visiting their family, they also stop working. Every day after sunset, they do not work any more. After dinner, some watch television; some drop in other villagers' homes; some chat with family members. To a neo-classical economist, there is a lot of potential surplus labour in the village. But the villagers have a different concept of time and work. To them, there is not something called 'surplus'. They work for subsistence. Although the level of subsistence is not fixed, it is never for accumulation of capital or maximization of profit. How long they work is greatly influenced by their family needs. They do not work more than their needs required only when they are forced to. Uncle Chang and his wife often work longer than other households as his son studied in the University of Jiaqing in Mei county, which costs around 8,000 yuan each year. Brother Xin works harder and longer because he has a son now. When their need is met, they stop working.

4.5 Villagers' Strategies for Survival

The villagers' income has increased at least 20 times over the past ten years, but this does not mean they have solved the problem of survival. In the village, I still often heard their "complaints" about the hardships of life. They complained that "everything is expensive" (*baiwu tenggui*) and that "there is never enough money" (*rubu fuzhi*) in Deng's era. According to my survey, 11 households borrowed money from the credit co-op (*xinyong she*) and ten households borrowed money from the other villagers (see Table 4.8). But the villagers are not passive victims of development, they have their own strategies to cope with difficulties of life.

Table 4.8 Number of Households Getting a Loan from Bank and Private (unit: yuan)

	No. of Households (Bank Loan)	No. of Households (Private Loan)
1100 to 2000	1	1
2100 to 3000	/	2
3100 to 4000	5	2
4100 to 5000	1	2
5100 to 6000	/	/
6100 to 7000	1	/
7100 to 8000	/	1
8100 and above	3	2

Source: my own survey.

Maintaining the Subsistent Economy

Although the dominant economic activity has shifted from rice production to cash crop plantation, Ku villagers still maintain many characteristic of subsistence economy. For subsistence security, many households did not totally abandon rice production. They clearly knew the fluctuation of price of rice in the market, so they kept some rice fields for self-consumption. Brother Xin explained why he went on in cultivating rice.

Our rice is for self-consumption, not for selling. The price of rice is so low in market. Nobody want to produce too much rice. The output is just enough for our mouths.

We still keep some fields for rice production. It is for security. You know, Shatian pomelo's production and price is unstable. Even if we lost in pomelo production, we still can survive.

Sister Feng also stated the same reason:

Yes, the price of Shatian pomelo is good in these several years, but who can guarantee what will happen in future. Maybe you can say peasants are *danxiao rushu* (as timid as mice). We are different from urban citizens; we have to feed ourselves. I don't want to take any risk. So we still keep some land for rice cultivation. You know the price of the market always changes. With rice, you will not become hungry ghost.

In Ku Village, I also found that every household kept a piece of land for vegetable growing. It was for self-consumption. They seldom bought and sold vegetables in the market town. Vegetables were the basic dish of every meal in Ku Village. The villagers grew a variety of vegetables on small pieces of land. It ensured that they could supply themselves with vegetables in different seasons. In everyday talking, they often discussed the fluctuation of vegetable prices in market. They also made fun of the urban people that bought the vegetables at a high price.

Aunt Guang: Hi sister, my husband just came back from Meicheng. He told me the vegetables are very expensive in Mei county.

Aunt Si: Really? How much per jin?

Aunt Guang: Really terrible, Chinese cabbage is about 1.2 yuan per jin. The chengshiren (urbanite) is so foolish. How can the Chinese cabbage be worth 1.2 per jin? If your Chinese cabbage is sent to market, I think you can earn much money.

Aunt Si: Don't be silly. My Chinese cabbage is just for self-consumption. So little cannot make any money.

Actually, the villagers seldom sell their vegetable in market because it is not for making profit. If they cannot consume all the vegetables, they will send some to their close relatives or the villagers with whom the villager has good relations.

The Drudgery of Labour

Generally the village family experiences a life-cycle starting with the marriage of the original nuclear couple, going on through child-bearing and rearing, the maturation of the children and their splitting off from the original family to start new families of their own elsewhere.¹⁵ The family at different stages have their different demands. The villagers usually says, "The only thing we have is our labour." When the demand and consumption increase, self-exploitation or drudgery of labour normally becomes the strategy of the village household to cope with the increased burdens or to keep up the family's standard of living. The village households most of the time are in position either to work more hours or to work intensively, sometimes even both.

¹⁵ I surely understand that there are variations between village households. There can be different organizations of families such as single family and so on.

Basically, the drudgery of the work is the subjective estimation of each village household. The subjective evaluation is often based on their life and production experience. So there is not any rigid rule or law for calculation. The villagers will put greater efforts only if they have reason to believe that it will increase their output which can be devoted to greater family consumption. They will not push the drudgery when they feel that there is no possibility of increasing in output. This output is often calculated into a single return as there are neither wages nor net profits in the villagers' conception. They do not concern themselves about how much effort they put into their work, but only the total output. One afternoon, when I was chatting with Brother Xin, he expressed the idea of labour drudgery.

Hok-Bin: Xin, how are you feeling after you became the father of a son?

Xin: I suddenly found my burden become heavier. Before I dared to take risks, but now I have to behave myself. I have to work harder than before. I have to save some money for my son's education.

Hok-Bin: What a great father! Very good.

Xin: To me, I have my labour with two hands, there is not any other way to make more money. But I have to make sure that my effort is worthwhile. If I find my whole year of working cannot increase my income, I will be very depressed and will not work hard any more.

Drudgery of labour is also the strategy of the villagers to cope with the fluctuation of market. To tackle this problem, the villagers often work harder and plant more pomelo tree to maintain their income and standard of living. In my conversation with Brother Li, he reflected their logic of calculation.

Hok-Bin: As I know, the price of pomelo is lower than last year. Will you still expand on your pomelo plantation?

Li: Even though the price is lower than last year, if my yield is higher than last year, I still don't lose. For example, this year my yield of pomelo is 1,000 jin and I sell one yuan per jin. Then I can earn 1,000 yuan. But if next year my yield of pomelo is 10,000 jin, even I only sell 0.5 yuan per jin, I still can get 5,000 yuan. Although the average price is lower this year, my total income is higher. My life will be better.

In sum, the village families can work longer hours, sell at lower prices, and obtain no net surplus in order to maintain their standard of living in the fluctuation of market.

Undifferentiated Role of the Labour

After the dismantling of the collective production, the villagers can freely make decisions about what to grow and what to do, when and where. They have freedom and flexibility to decide their time usage. In the village, the villagers do not only participate in agricultural production, if it is feasible, they also engage in different kind of jobs for improving their standard of living or meeting the needs of family, especially in a bad harvest year or if there is an increase in the family demands. In the Table 4.9, we can find that in addition to farming activities, the villagers also participated in business and other economic activities. In the village, many households have motorcycles. The motorcycle are not just used for self-transport, but also for carrying passengers. Wen-ming owns a motorcycle. Anytime when other villagers asked for transport to township, he would put aside his work at hand because money was easily made in transporting passengers. Brother Xin owned a tractor, any time the people in the village or outside village asked for transporting the sand, cement, fertilizer and so on, he also set aside his family's work.

Table 4.9. Other Economic Activities in Ku Village

	No of Households
Industry	3
Business	10
Education	3
Transport	1
Construction	1
Services	1
Others	2

Sources: my own survey.

In the harvest, some villagers collect the pomelo from other households and directly trade to town and city. According to the villagers, most pomelos are re-sold and exported to Pearl River Delta, Shenzhen, Guangzhou, and Shantou. Some even export to Hong Kong and overseas. The teachers of Songxi primary school, such as Uncle Xiang and his wife, and Wen-ying and his wife, also participated in sideline activities. Some young villagers left the village and went to work in factories in PRD, Guangzhou, Shenzhen and other cities, and some of them sent money back to support their family.

In sum, the differentiated role of the villagers also causes them to suffer less in the bad year of harvest or natural disaster because their income from sideline activities supplements their loss from the natural disaster.

Diversification of Production in Ku Village

The local government continuously encouraged the villagers to expand their production on pomelo. But in recent years, the price of Shatian pomelo began to drop. Some villagers in Ku Village begin to diversify their plantations. They foresaw the market of Shatian pomelo would be saturated in coming several years. That means the price of the Shatian pomelo would not rise. Meanwhile, they found that the price of other kinds of fruit was attractive. So some of the village households limited or reduce their plantation of Shatian pomelo.

Table 4.10. Number of Household Planting Orange and Other Fruits

	Number of Households	
	Orange Trees	Other Fruit Trees
no plantation	25	27
less than 10	0	3
11 to 20	1	9
21 to 30	3	1
31 to 40	2	1
41 to 50	5	0
51 to 60	0	0
61 to 70	2	0
71 to 80	0	1
more than 80	7	3

Sources: my own survey.

In my own survey, I found there was a increase in plantations of summer oranges and Sanhua plum in Ku Village (see the Table 4.10). The villagers also made the experiment of planting watermelon. One day while I visited Brother Kan in his field of Luojiang oranges, he told me about his views of plantations:

I think one of the important things of plantations is fully utilizing the time of the whole year and diversifying the crops. There are different times of growth and harvest among different fruits. If you can fully utilize the time gap of growing of different fruits, you will not waste your time. Such now I am busy with summer oranges. In autumn, I

will be busy with Shatian pomelo. In spring, I will be busy with ploughing rice. So I will not waste my time.

I also like to try many different new varieties of fruit. New fruit often can be sold at a good price. So updating the market information is also very important. After many people plant that kind of fruit like a swarm of bees (*yi wo feng*), the price will become low. So now I will not increase my Shatian pomelo trees any more.

Diversifying the crops can guarantee our income. Because when there is any natural disaster like parasites on one kind of fruit, the other kind of fruit can supplement the loss.

4.6. Discussion

Getting insight from Foucault's notion of power/ knowledge, some scholars (e.g. A. Escobar, 1995; D. Ludden, 1992) have treated development not only as a question of political economy, but also of culture. Escobar pays much attention to how the West dominated the third world through constructing the discourse of the "developed" and "underdeveloped". Ludden shows us how modern state and government grounded their legitimacy through establishing the regime of development for the sake of obtaining the consent from below.

Since the 1980s, one of the important tasks of Deng's government is also to construct the regime of development. New types of knowledge about development have been deployed in rural China which try to insure the conformity of Chinese peasants to a certain type of economic and cultural behaviors. Modernization in terms of privatization (division of land), marketization and commercialization was the "regime of truth" in Deng's era, which presumed that history had a one-way progression -- passing through the stages which lead from a society without a market economy to a civilized society with a market economy. In the official discourse, it is only through the modernization led by the CCP, that the Chinese peasants have a way out of backwardness and poverty. The construction of the discourse of *gaige kaifang* is never constructed without foundation. It is connected to the concrete living experience of the peasants, e.g. the social lack, urban-rural chasm in Mao's China. The peasants' desire of escaping poverty forced them to resist the collective system and search for alternative modes of production. Their resistance to the collective

economy forced the CCP government to abandon the collective production and adopt the peasant invented household contracting system at the first stage of *gaige kaifang*. In the reform era, the new knowledge of development, e.g. the concept of a socialist market economy was invented by the government, which emphasized commodity production, profit maximization, large scale production and efficiency. The Meixian government's idea of Shatian pomelo plantation programme basically came from the concept of a socialist market economy.

Following the suit of Mao's government, the new plantation programme became the region-wide development project which was imposed on every village. But as Long has said, any top-down and planned interventions by the government cannot totally shape the local society, and can never succeed in controlling the daily life of the local people, since local people actively formulate and pursue their own "programme of development", which may clash with the interest of central authority (Long, 1992, 1993). Although the local economy was transformed from rice production to pomelo plantation, the commercialized economy still cannot obliterate the subsistent oriented-economy in Ku Village. To the villagers, the Shatian pomelo plantation programme only provided them a new chance of making money -- not for reinvestment or accumulation, but for maintaining livelihood, children's education, building new houses, and purchasing TVs, furniture, video players and other luxurious goods. The villagers still maintain their conception of land, labour, wage and so on, and economic practices in everyday life. The 'safety first' principle is still rooted in their economic practices. They prefer to avoid economic disaster rather than taking risks to maximize their profit. They have their own rationality and way of calculation which is different from the modern economic model in term of labour, wage, profit and rational calculation.

The state is not only unable to totally shape the economic life of villagers, the pomelo plantation programme also created another unintended consequence -- eroding the authority of the village cadres. After the decollectivization, the means of production were no longer controlled by the collective. From an economic perspective, the local cadres no longer acted as the middleman in allocating work assignments, administering work points and regulating private plots. The villagers freely obtained their resource of production like seed, fertilizers and pesticide in the

opening market. It was no longer necessary for the villagers to exchange their support and loyalty for obtaining more resources and benefits from the cadres. The abolishment of the 'three fixed policy' also gave the villagers autonomy in the agricultural production and transaction. Before the introduction of Shatian pomelo plantation programme in 1986, the villagers still depended on the contracted rice field for survival. The village cadres to certain extent still maintained the power of controlling the ownership of land. Any unruly and tricky fellow (*tiaopi fenzi*) would have his land contract canceled for punishment. However, the development of Shatian pomelo further eroded cadres' power of controlling the contract of land. This is because most of the land for pomelo plantation was reclaimed by the villagers. Under the government policy of "whoever reclaims the wasteland, own the land", the local cadres had no right in controlling the land opened up by villagers. After the Shatian pomelo became the dominant income source of the villagers, the contracted rice field became less important. This implied that the local cadres lost an important control mechanism. In 1992, the Guangdong government changed its regulation of paying compulsory rice purchase quotas in grain to paying in cash, which further released Guangdong peasants from the rice field. They enjoyed much freedom to engage in sideline and non-agricultural activities. The local cadres could not intervene in the production of villagers any longer.

In sum, the case of Meixian reminds us firstly to pay attention to the dialectical relationship between the constitution of development policy and the operation of power; secondly not to oversimplify the complicated set of processes which involve the struggle and negotiation of interpretation of the meaning of policy during the implementation process; thirdly to pay attention to the local social and cultural processes in which the local society and people actively adopt their own culture to formulate, reshape the policy and pursue their own 'programmes of development'.

农业税及乡镇各粮入库结算卡

单位：稻谷、公斤。

项 目	农业税		乡 镇 各 粮									
	谷 额	金 额	合 计	优 抚	五 保	水 利	护 林	教 育	自 筹	金 额	谷 额	金 额
当年任务	82 ⁰⁰	46.74		45 ⁰⁰	45 ⁰⁰					9 ⁰⁰		
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注：农户交农业税及乡镇各粮时，每次都要带此卡前来办理入库手续。



4.2. cooperation in harvest





4.3. Shatian pome



4.4. trading the pomelo



4.5. packing the pomelo

Chapter 5: Defining Zeren -- Villager's View on "Good Government" and "Good Cadres"

The sunshine was so lovely in the dusk. Many hues of rosy clouds were floating in the sky. Birds flew and insects chirped. It's getting dark. Villagers had put down their farming tools. Smoke was spiraling from kitchens of every household. I was walking on the small field path. Suddenly I heard the sound of a hoe from the field. "Who's that? Why still working?" I thought. I walked toward the field and found that it was Sister Ying.

"Hi, Sister Ying. How are you doing?"

"Hi Hok-Bin, where're you going?"

"I just came back from the reservoir. I am going home."

"Oh," she continued working without saying anything more.

"Sister Ying, why are you working so hard? It is getting dark," I tried to continue our dialogue.

She stopped and looked at me. Then she slowly said: "You know our family only have two pairs of hand, but six mouths to feed. We have no alternative."

I kept in silence and felt helpless.

"Now everything is expensive. Our income really cannot cover our expenditures," she continued to say.

"Do you mind to tell me how much your income was last year?" I made bold to ask this question.

"It is difficult to say how much. This year we almost get 5,000 jin of Shatian pomelo. Generally, the purchasing price of Shatian pomelo is 1.5 yuan per jin..." Sister Ying's family still kept about 4 mu of field for grain cultivation. They could harvest more than one thousand jin of grain per year which was sufficient for self-consumption.

"Not bad, you are a wanyuan hu (10 thousand yuan household) too," I said.

"In our village, most people are wanyuan hu. Now wanyuan hu means nothing. Our expenditure is so huge. Our three children are all still in school. The oldest one has to du gaojiashu. Besides the 1,000 yuan school fee, I must give her another 500 yuan for food each term. Two younger ones' school fee is about 300 yuan per year. I also have to give them 20 yuan for food each week ..."

I could not help to interrupting her, "what's the meaning of gaojiashu?"

"When the children fail to reach the mark line (fengshu xian) of the school in the open examination of senior middle school (gao kao), they can buy a position with a higher school fee," Sister Ying explained.

"Does the Chinese government provide free education, or doesn't it?" I asked.

"Pian shiren (Lie to the dead)! Today the government only recognizes money. No money, no talk," she said angrily.

"Do you think it's the government's zeren to provide free education?" I asked.

"Of course, Before we spent little money on education. The government also subsidized the poor children. Now everything is expensive. Like seeing a doctor (kanbing) is terribly expensive. My mother was sick these two months and we have spent a lot of money. We don't dare to see the doctor even when we were sick, unless we cannot get up from bed."

"Is it also very expensive in the public hospital?"

"Not only expensive, their service and attitude is also the worst."

"Is there any medical welfare for the elderly from the government?" I kept on asking.

"Now the government does nothing for us, we depend on ourselves."

"You just say 'before'. What does that mean? Do you mean in Mao's era?"

"Yes."

* * * *

It is said that *Gaige kaifang* brings Chinese to the way of riches. It is promised by the "new" Socialist regime that there is a better future for China in terms of rapid economic progress, better education, health services, and so forth. Indeed, some people and regions have got riches as Deng Xiao-ping said, but contrary to what he said, the rich region is not bringing along the poor areas to walk out of poverty. There is an increasing gap between rich and poor individuals, as well as between wealthy and impoverished provinces. Rural incomes also lag far behind those of city residents. According to statistics, per capita income in the countryside was only 1577.7 yuan a year in 1995, about 40% of the urban average of 3892.9 yuan. It was also reported that some 65 million struggled to survive on income below the official poverty line (*pingqiong xian*) of US\$ 64 a year (China Statistical Publishing House,

1996). The ailing state enterprises also cause a lot of problems. These decrepit firms, employing some 100 million workers, are swamped by debt, surplus labor and bloated inventories. Although the government has been pumping billions of dollars into them to stave off their bankruptcy, the out-of-date equipment and corrupt and incompetent managers of the state enterprises still make them hopelessly uncompetitive, and they operate at a loss. The cutting off of the subsidies has aroused the discontent of the state workers. The shutting down of the big, inefficient and monopolistic enterprises also threw millions out of work. Already, the serious unemployment has caused wild-cat strikes and noisy demonstration which have disrupted several regions.

Corruption is another serious problem in the reform era, which is biting into everyone's purse as petty officials, communist bureaucrats, soldiers and policemen and middlemen greedily siphon off anything they can stuff into their own pockets. The new regime experienced its second legitimacy crisis in the late 1980s. The 1989 democracy movement in Tiananmen Square directly challenged the authority of the socialist state, and questioned the *zeren* of the government to maintain social integrity and equality. This was in direct response to the perceived increase in corruption and social inequality. In front of *Renmin Dahui Tang* (People's Conference Hall), the student representatives bowed down to petition the People's Representative Congress to fulfill its *zeren* of anti-corruption and political reform. However, the 1989 democracy movement did not bring great transformation to the central political system of China. It was labeled by the socialist government as anti-revolutionary "*dong luan*" or "*bao luan*". "*Luan*" can be translated as "chaos", which describes the breakdown of the natural order of things. The government drew a picture of a chaotic China without future and gave warning that the *dongluan* would threaten the fruit of *gaige kaifang* and modernization process of China.¹ The collapse of Communism in the former Soviet Union and the economic hardship of the former Soviet empire also became the cultural sign adopted by the CCP government as evidence to justify its 1989 crackdown. Afraid of chaos, the breakup of the country, and economic hardship, the Chinese people remained in silence and the country maintained surface stability.

¹ . See the document of CCP's propaganda department *Bixu qizhi xianming di fandui dongluan* (attacking the chaos and violence firmly and clearly) and *Jianjue yonghu dangzhongyang juece, jianjue pingxi fangeming baoluan* (Firmly supporting the decision of the Central, firmly suppressing the anti-revolutionary violence).

But it would be a mistake to assume that it implies the socialist regime has obtained consent from below. As Vaclav Havel states,

After every social upheaval, people invariably come back in the end to their daily labors, for the simple reason that they **want to stay alive**; they do so for their own sake, after all, not for the sake of this or that team of political leaders (1991:50, my own emphasis).

Moreover, the political system of China prevents the emergence of any organized opposition inside or outside the Party, as Liu Bin-yan said, "leaving no room for an alternative" (1992:6). After the 1989 Tiananmen event, Chinese people do not directly confront the government for sake of avoiding the armed force crackdown and bloodshed.

If students of peasant politics look for the movements involving direct, often violent, confrontations between the wielders of power and dissident groups, they would feel that peasants are apolitical and passive. However, if they shift their focus to everyday life occasions, they will find that peasants are not as powerless as our what we imagined, which constrained by the theoretical limitation of social protest. In mainland China, scattered reports of dispersed protests never stopped coming to our ears in recent decades, although they have not yet come together and remain fragmentary and contingent. They thus fail to cohere into any form of systematic understanding within public knowledge. Staying in Ku Village for more than a year, I felt that the *guanxi* between the state and peasants has become worse and worse in China, because the voices of discontent with the socialist government and its local cadres persist.

Ku Village is a village which has benefited from the *gaige kaifang*. The average income of the village household has increased many times and there is a remarkable improvement in living standards. But the "economic achievement" does not guarantee that the socialist government gets the credit from the villagers. The villagers never stopped complaining about the government and its local cadres. They were aware that they had lost something time-honoured. They, including the village cadres, found that they were being forgotten by the government. They sensed that rural reform had violated the former, maybe their ideal, government-villagers *guanxi*. They have begun to question about the role and *zeren* of the government in the reform era. Villagers' awareness, or consciousness if you like, is connected to their

concrete living experiences and other information which is obtained from different sources. As active actors, they are capable of appropriating means and information for their own sake; they are capable of constructing their own philosophy on such as what a "good government" and "good local cadres" look like. They never systematically tell you what is a good government and good cadres, but express and reveal their view in everyday discourse, sometimes in grumbling, sometimes in disputes, and sometimes in praise. So in this chapter, I will pay much attention on villagers' daily conversations in order to let the silent voices of the villagers speak out, through which we can understand their sense of risk and insecurity in the post-reform era and how they constitute their ideal of good government and cadres through defining *zeren*.

To make sense of the villagers' everyday discourse of "good government" and "good cadres", we must locate their daily conversations in the specific social and historical context of China in the reform era. For instance, in the new administrative system, the local governmental organizations no longer totally control the means of production nor directly intervene into the daily production of the peasants. The new Constitution has redefined the roles and functions of the new local administrative organizations, the ADC and villagers' committee, which were continuously entitled to provide social welfare and manage the public utility. However, different from the old system, the ADC and villagers' committee got no financial support from the government due to the fiscal reform in the mid-1980s. All these made them difficult to fulfill their *zeren* and aroused the discontent of the villagers. The economic reform in terms of the household responsibility system has also changed villagers' perception of their relationship with the state. They have tended to perceive their relationship with the state in contractual terms. In land contracts there is public or government ownership of the land with peasant households entitled to user rights and, in return for these rights, villagers are obliged to contract a portion of the produce or pay a cash fee to the government. Besides the relationship in land contracts, the villagers continued to articulate their entitlement to social security, which had existed in Mao's China, as part of a new social contract between the government and villager. Moreover, in the reform era, the open door policy have decisively created some free space for Chinese rural society, in which the rural population is able to access

different sorts of information for comparison and articulate their own interest after comparison. Their awareness of entitlement to social security and services from the government was fostered or reinforced by comparative knowledge or new kinds of knowledge of social security and services provided by other local government within China or by the national government outside of China. So in this chapter, I will also examine how the intervention of mass media, the relaxed restrictions on rural-urban migration, the returning of the overseas Chinese, and the free interaction between village and village made comparative knowledge available to the villagers and help the formation of villagers' conception of "good government" and "good cadres".

5.1. Mass Media Unbound: From Radio to Satellite TV

One day afternoon, I heard someone cried loudly on the roof.

"Hi, is the screen clear?"

"Not yet, turn the TV antenna to another direction," someone replied loudly.

"Is it all right?"

"Yes, seems to be better. Move it slowly.... Okay! Stop!"

I came out to see what was happening. Oh, brother Hong just bought a new Sanyo colour TV and now was setting up the TV antenna on the roof. He asked me to set up the TV programmes for them because the menu was in English. The villagers liked Japanese products rather than the ones made in China because they thought the quality of Japanese products was better even though they were much more expensive. The villagers often made the antenna by themselves with a long bamboo pole and some copper pipes. Because the TV signal is not so clear in the village, most of the villagers have set up their pot-like satellite antenna which can receive programmes from more than 15 TV stations of different provinces (see Picture 5.1).

Television and Satellite TV was an unthinkable to Ku villagers in Mao's era. At that time, in Ku Village, there was only one old radio which belonged to a landlord family, but later was confiscated by the government. In the socialist state,

one of the important ways of domination was to dictate an authoritative interpretation and discourse by controlling mass media. Since 1949, the socialist government actively set up the wired broadcast network for the sake of reaching people directly (Lull, 1991). Radio stations and programmes were strictly under the control of the CCP. Radio signals from Beijing were transmitted to villages throughout China via a series of repeater stations that fed the signals to loudspeakers which hung in villages. The socialist government propagated its policies and social campaigns through the loudspeaker broadcasts everyday. The villagers recalled that the broadcasts talked everyday about Marxism-Leninism-Mao Ze-dong thought and socialism. The remarkable thing was that the radio broadcasted the music of "Dong Fang Hong" (The East is Red) everyday in the early morning. Apart from the radio, the CCP controlled the newspapers and most of the publications in order to unify ideology and interpretation. In Mao's China, only the rural cadres were eligible to read the official newspaper.

The CCP government not only strictly controlled the mass media, but also migration of the population. Household registration and travel policies promulgated in 1955-1956 tied peasants to the farming land and limited the freedom of migration of the rural population. Villagers who wanted to go to the city or other provinces had to get the certificate issued by the brigade or commune. This policy was to prevent the explosion of urban population, but the hidden purpose was to prevent the circulation of information between the urban and the rural, the central and the periphery.

The closed door of mainland China also limited the interaction between the rural population and the outside world. The overseas Chinese were not allowed to visit their homeland until the mid-1970s. Different kinds of political campaigns stopped villagers from contacting their overseas family members or relatives since everyone having *haiwai guanxi* (overseas network) would probably be labeled as *tewu* (spy) -- one of the five bad categories (*hei wulei*). So villagers in Mao's era almost did not know what happened outside China and what the foreign countries really looked like. They had only one source of information from the government. As Uncle Nian-hua said:

Gongchandang (CCP) told us that the capitalist society was an exploitative society. The people in capitalist society lived in deep water and scorching fire (*shenghuo zai shuishen huore zhizhong*). We didn't know whether it was true. But we couldn't imagine there was any people living in more suffering than us.

The open door policy in the late 1970s has transformed rural life in China. Compared with Mao's China, there is more free space in Deng's China. At least three remarkable features can be identified:

1) Modern technology such as television, radio and video has entered into everyday life of Chinese villagers during the past decade. The remarkable improvement in living standards of the Chinese peasants, especially the peasants in South China, made more and more rural households capable of purchasing a TV set and radio. According to my investigation, in 1996, there are about twenty-nine (64.4%) households in Ku Village having television -- many have colour models; there are twenty-two (48.9%) households in Ku Village having radio set; and there are about ten (22.2%) households having video cassette recorders (VCR).

Although the CCP government still can control the programmes of official stations, e.g. CCTV and CC radio, and make use of the TV or radio to convey its policies, many channels are beyond its control. Today there are many TV and radio programmes produced by different provinces, cities and counties. According to Wang (1988b), there are more than 800 FM and AM radio broadcasting stations in China, and more than 624 short-wave stations, including three channels that cover the entire country. In Ku Village, I found that the villagers could easily receive radio programmes from other provinces as well as from Taiwan and Hongkong. For example, in 1996, the Ku villagers directly learned the result of the Taiwan presidential election and Li Denghui's inaugural speech through the Taiwan's radio channel. The next day they discussed the election among themselves. They also made comparisons between the CCP government and the Taiwan government. I heard some villagers said, "Their government is elected by the people. Our government is inherited. No matter whether it behaves good or bad, we cannot change it."

In the 90s, China quickly expanded telecommunications satellites. I was so surprised that in Ku Village, many households had set up satellites TV. The establishment of satellite TV makes the villagers not only receive local TV

programmes, but also access information from other provinces. Now they have many different choices of TV programmes. According to Lull (1991), there are more than 400 television stations broadcast throughout the country. In addition to locally produced programmes, there are many movies and TV series imported from Hongkong, Eastern Europe, Britain, and the United States. The Hongkong TV series and movies are the most popular one. The VCR also becomes more and more popular in the village too. They easily get the video from township's video shops, and Hongkong's *Gongfu* video is the most popular one.

2) Newspaper is another important sources for the villagers to access information of outside world. Comparatively speaking, the socialist government in Deng's era has released its news control, especially in coastal areas. In Meixian, besides the official newspaper, there are several other kinds of newspapers published by a private news agency. The young villagers call these newspaper *xiaobao* (small-sized newspaper). Most of them like to read *xiaobao* rather than the official newspaper because *xiaobao* often expose the inside story (*neimu xiaoxi*). To them the official newspaper is boring, as it is mainly for conveying state policies. Some old villagers still get used to read official newspapers. In Ku Village, at least five households subscribed to the local official newspaper -- *Meizhou Daily*. They have a habit of circulating the newspaper to other households with good *guanxi*, or to share the news with others in their everyday chatting. The local residents can also get overseas newspapers like Hongkong's *Wen Hui Bao* from Mei city. Through the Hong Kong newspaper, they can obtain the information which is impossible to get from the local newspapers.

3) The relaxation of rural-urban migration also promotes the communication between the rural and the urban areas. The young villagers working at cities and Special Economic Zone would bring the news of cities and the outside world back to the village. Overseas Chinese are another information source. Since the late 1970s, many overseas Chinese have visited their homeland. They brought many material goods, e.g. foreign style of clothes, bicycles, sewing machines, radios, televisions and VCRs to their relatives. In Ku Village, the first black-white television set was brought by an overseas relative in 1981. Their overseas relatives from Indonesia, Hongkong or Singapore and Malaysia also introduced their countries, their government and their life in foreign countries to the villagers. I, as their relative, coming from Hongkong

and studying in England, also became a source of information. Everyday when I was chatting with them, they would ask me something about the life of overseas people and overseas governments.

More and more information has been made available to the rural population. To become more knowledgeable, the villagers may subscribe to newspapers and magazines, listen to radio broadcasts, watch television news, and gather stories from villagers from villagers returning from other places. Even though the socialist state still intends to manipulate the mass media to serve a unifying ideological purpose and cultivating "spiritual civilization" after the 1989 democracy movement, the aim seems to be difficult to achieve. As de Certeau (1984) claimed: "since the images broadcast by television and the time spent in front of the TV set have been analyzed, it remains to be asked what the consumer makes of these images and during these hours." The consumers are not just passive receivers, even the dominant group totally control the data of information, they still have their free space of interpretation/ reinterpretation or imagination. In Ku Village, I found that the villagers were capable of making use the official information, e.g. official news reports, TV programs, and policy statements, to serve their own interest. In short, no totalitarian government can successfully control "What do they make of what they 'absorb', receive, and pay for? What do they do with it?" In sum, as the villagers said, "*you bijiao jiu zhidao*" (comparison makes things clear). Information from different sources enriched their knowledge of the outside world, which became their frame of reference in defining the government's *zeren*. They are able to appropriate the information as their schema for comparison; through comparison, the villagers construct their model of "good government" and "good cadres".

5.2. Redefining the Functions of the Local Administrative Organization

Accompanying the economic reform, one of the other obvious changes in reform era was the reconstruction of the local administrative organisation. State power-holders declared the political reform in rural areas as the "decentralisation" of power, with "limitations" on excessive state interference. According to the Law of

1982, the formal governmental organisation returned to the *xian* or *zhen* level. The state's agents at *zhen* or *xian* (township) level no longer interfered with rural economic life, and the villagers were offered autonomy in production and almost all aspects of life (White, 1990; Wang, 1992; Gong, 1990).² From 1958 until 1982, the lowest level of government used to be the commune. It was the grass roots government below the county level and it functioned as the collective economic and management unit. The combination of government administrative and economic management (*zhengshi heyi*) created a number of problems. As Wang states, "many of the problems stemmed from the over concentration of decision making powers in the hands of a few commune leaders. Particularly troublesome was the interference of the commune, in its role as governmental administrator, in the activities of the production team" (Wang, 1992:161-162). One of the goals of the restructuration of local organizations was to promote village level autonomy.

In 1983, the policy was transmitted from Songnan commune to Xiaohuang brigade, and then to the production teams in Ku Village. The villagers heard of the reconstruction of the local administrative organisation during a mass meeting held by the production team. But according to the villagers, they were not so excited because they knew the government often changed its policies and the policies were difficult to fulfil at the local level.³ As they said, "the government always says one thing and does another (*jiang yitao, zuo yitao*). We do not totally trust the state policies."

Under the new arrangement, the political and administrative authority of Songnan Communes transferred to Songnan *xiang* or township government, with economic functions transferred to subordinate economic management committee (*jingji guanli weiyuanhui*). It aimed to separate the politics and economics, and to

². Some scholars argue that the communist state increasingly loses its ability to reach rural society based on the evidence that the distortion of policy often occurs at local level (Zweig, 1983 & 1984). But some argue that this should not mislead us in to think that the state has retreated from the village. They insist that the party-state still influences the life of the peasant when it wants to do so, and the introduction of market forces exposes peasants to less predictable economic conditions in which the central government can intervene more directly (Shue, 1988).

³. Some scholars have commented that this is only the revival of traditional government which does not directly intervene the village below *xian*. Shue (1988) basically takes the opposite standpoint. She believes that the dismantling of collective economy will shake both the organizational skeleton of honeycomb polity and the morality of localism. The solidarity of the village permits the state to penetrate into rural communities and strengthens the state's influence on village society.

permit a greater degree of independent management of the rural economy.⁴ Under the new local government arrangement, the township people's congress elects the township people's government. The township people's government, formally defines different committees discharging responsibilities in the areas of dispute mediation, public security maintenance, tax collection, education, public health, and family planning. At the same time, Xiaohuang production brigades were converted to administrative villages (*xingzhen cun*) led by villagers' committee (*cunmin weiyuanhui*), and production teams in Ku Village were converted to village small groups (*cunxiao zu*). But in 1989, Guangdong government modified the structure of local administrative organisations. The administrative districts committee (*guanli qu weiyuanhui*) replaced the villagers' committee at the level of the pre-reform production brigade, while the villagers' committee replaced the village small groups which set up in natural village.

According to Article 111 of the 1982 constitution and the "Organic Law Governing Village Committees of the People's Republic of China" in 1987, the law provides a grass roots level of local self-government below the township structure in rural areas. The township government is formally regarded as the lowest organ of state power. The ADC and the villagers' committee are defined as a mass organization of self-management at the grassroots level. Although the villagers' committee is not recognised formally as a local government unit, it is still required by the government to undertake a number of administrative tasks (*xingzheng zeren*) in areas such as -- water conservation, villagers' welfare programs, mediation of civil disputes, public order, and rules governing villagers' conduct. So the *guanxi* between the village committee and the township government becomes ambiguous. From 1986 to 1987, the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress debated questions concerning the *guanxi* between the villagers' committees and township government.

Finally, according to the law, the role of the ADC or the villagers' committee is to serve as a "*qiao liang*" (bridge) between the villagers and local township authorities, and the ADC or the villagers' committees are not a governmental organ but a mass organisation. Their task is defined to assist local government in

⁴. More important, as White states, power is decentralized or redistributed in favour of individual villagers and autonomous villagers' committees (White, 1990).

administrative work and leadership over production. Their relation with township, as officially defined, is "one between those who guide and those who are guided", but not between the leader and those who are led (Zhang & Bai, 1989; Xie, 1991). The chairman, vice-chairmen and members of ADC or villagers' committee are to be elected by the villagers. Any villager over age 18 is qualified to participate in village congress to discuss and decide village affairs. The law states that while villagers' representative congress may dismiss the elected cadres, the village regulations may be promulgated only with the approval of the villagers' representative congress, and the expense needed to run public utilities must be discussed and approved by the congress (Zhang & Bai, 1989; Xie, 1991). In sum, based on official interpretations, the reconstruction of the local administrative organisation aims to allow peasants to exercise autonomy over their own affairs. Additionally, it provides an opportunity for the 800 million peasants to learn and practice democracy through election of village committee. I will describe how the grassroots democracy practised in Ku Village in detail in Chapter 8.

The law also summarises the duties and responsibilities (*gongzuo he zeren*) of the local administrative organisation as -- people's mediation, public security, public health and other matters in order to manage public affairs (such as road and bridge repairs). It is also to provide social services (such as nurseries and homes for the aged, organising the cultural and recreational activities in their areas), mediate civil disputes, help maintain public order, convey residents' opinion and demands, and make suggestions to the people's government as a channel between the government and the masses (Zhang & Bai, 1989; Xie, 1991; Wang, 1992).

In contrast to Mao's China, the local cadres no longer monopolise the sources of information and interpretation of state policies and laws. Now, through the mass media, e.g. newspapers and magazines, the villagers also know the state policies in detail. Some of them are able to compare the local practice with the policy. To Ku villagers, there was a great discrepancy between the state's declared goal and the real situation. In Ku Village, the separation of politics and economy is still not clear. The Party Secretary Songsheng continues to intervene in the economic activities in the village. The grassroots democratic practices, in villagers' eyes, seem to be undemocratic. Some of the village leaders are still appointed by the local government.

Many statements in the constitution are a mere formality. For example, the villagers' representative congress actually did not exist in Ku Village. This implies that the villagers have no right to dismiss the village cadres, and that the decisions about public affairs are made by the cadres, not by the villagers' representatives. The ADC and the villagers' committee also have not fulfilled their *zeren*, e.g. social security and public affair, as defined by the government. All of this has caused dissatisfaction among the villagers who time and again question the *zeren* of the government and challenge the legitimacy of the local government and its agents. In following sections, I will try to illustrate how the villagers perceive their government and village cadres through their everyday conversations.

Before coming to decipher the villagers' view of the "good government" and "good cadres", I would like to clarify the ordinary language the villagers used to refer the state or government. For the villagers, they indiscriminately referred the state (*guojia*) to the government (*zhengfu*) or Chinese Communist Party (*gongchandang*). Sometimes they interchanged in using these terms. But sometimes they used the specific term to signify a specific kind of government. I found when they referred to the bad government or irresponsible government, they seldom used the broader term like "*guojia*" or "*zhengfu*"; instead, they employed the term "*gongchandang*" (CCP).

When they used the term *zhengfu*, most of the time, they also did not clearly divide central government (*zhongyang zhengfu*), provincial government (*sheng zhengfu*), township government (*zhen zhengfu*) and the administrative organizations, e.g. administrative district committee (ADC, *guanli qu*) below the township government. They usually used a broader term "*zhengfu*". However, in some situations, they would identify clearly which level of government they criticized. For instance, when I purposefully asked them to clarify which level of government they criticized in their complaint about heavy levies, after considering this a few minutes, they carefully settled on the *zhen zhengfu* (township government) or local government, as their answer. The villagers explained that the local government in China often made *tu zhengce* (local policy) which distorted the objectives of the central government, and it was reasonable to resist the *tuzhengce*. I do not know whether this was their view originally or if it was their strategy for the sake of safety. But at least I

know that holding this view is safer for them because this view is confirmed by the central government. In the official newspapers or TV programmes, sometimes the misconduct of the local cadres was exposed and judged. The miscreant local cadres was criticized by the central government as an obstacle to Chinese modernization. In this sense, employing the "central government" to back up their resistance is one of their strategies.

I also found that old habits died hard and the villagers continued to employ the old name of local government and administrative organization in Mao's period. They continuously used *gongshe* (commune) to refer to the township government as well as used *dadui* (brigade) and *shengchan dui* (production team) to refer to *guanliqu* (administrative district) and *cunwei* (villagers' committee). The underlying meaning of their "stubbornness" maybe tells us something about their attitude toward the new local government in Deng's era. There was also ambiguity in the villagers' defining of *ganbu* (cadres). Formally, in the state's hierarchical system, the township government is the lowest level of state administration. Only township-level officials are considered "*guojia ganbu*" (state cadres), receiving salaries from the state payroll. In contrast, the cadres of *guanliqu* and *cunwei* are considered as "*difang ganbu*" (local cadres) because they do not receive the state payroll. But the villagers do not divide *guojia ganbu* or *difang ganbu* clearly. They regard all the officials as *ganbu*. But when they talked about the *ganbu*, they often referred to the local cadres of *guanliqu* or *cunwei*. This was because in rural China, the conflict and struggle over land, resources, harvests, water management, child bearing and daily activities between the state and villagers take place at these two levels, but not at the higher level. The villagers' interactions with the state are filtered through these *difang ganbu*. These *difang ganbu* engage in day-to-day relationship with the villagers and routinely interpret state policy and control the upward flow of information.

5.3. Questioning Zeren of the Government

This section consists of a series of dialogues and conversations in Ku Village. It attempts to reveal the villagers' sense of insecurity and their view of the socialist government under Deng via their everyday narrative. Villagers did not systematically

state their political philosophy, such as what a good government looks like. They also did not define government's *zeren* in terms of regulation clearly. They produced their model of good government as well as bad government collectively on everyday occasion. *Chuan men kou* (mutual visiting) is a very important practice for them to produce their shared knowledge. Although it is difficult to argue that they preach their idea of the government consciously in political sense, it cannot be denied that unintentionally they arrive a consensus among themselves.

Sense of Insecurity in Daily Conversation

Dialogue I - On Eldercare

Chuan menkou (visiting relatives and friend from door to door) is a daily practice of the Ku villagers. I also formed the habit. After lunch and dinner, I would visit different villager households. We chatted about anything under heaven and earth (*tan tian shuo di*). Today I visited Uncle Wen's family as usual. Uncle Wen was about 60 years old who returned to Ku Village from Singapore when he was 15 years old. He still had some relatives staying overseas. Since he was well educated, he became the accountant of the ancestral hall committee. He actively participated into the activities of the "*laoren zhi jia*" (recreation center of the elders). He was the one who liked to know the things of other countries.

There is no starting and ending in everyday conversation. I could not remember how we started to talk something about the eldercare.

Uncle Wen: "Hok-Bin, does your government provide pension for the elderly?"

Hok-Bin: "Yes, it does."

Uncle Wen: "How much of a pension?"

Hok-Bin: "Nh, I think it depends on different situations. Generally, when you are 60 years old, you are qualified to get the pension. If you are single or you haven't any children, you can get much more. Each old person can get around 2,500 to 3,000 Hongkong dollars per month."

Uncle Wen: "Wah! I think their monthly pension is enough for my whole year expenditure."

Hok-Bin: "But, I think two or three thousands isn't enough for a person living in Hongkong."

Uncle Wen: "But if they come to the mainland, they will be the rich people."

"Yes, that's so. But ..." Hok-Bin kept in silence.

Uncle Wen: "Hok-Bin, how about England's situation?"

Hok-Bin: "I am not quite sure, but I think it is better than Hongkong. Hongkong's old people are among the most miserable in the world."

Uncle Wen: "No, at least your government puts some effort to take care of the elderly. But what about our government? Is there anything it does for the rural old people? Nothing! We are different from the elderly in cities. They have retirement pay, but we have to depend on ourselves. My relatives from Singapore told us that the peasants in Singapore have retirement. How good they are! They don't need to depend on their children when they retire."

Hok-Bin: "I think the pension is not totally paid by the Singapore government. They have to pay the tax when they're still young."

Uncle Wen: "We would also willingly pay the tax if the government provided such welfare to us."

Hok-Bin: "But as I know, every Administrative District in Mei County has its own 'elder's house' (laoren zhi jia); your government still provides something for the old villagers."

Uncle Wen: "Don't you believe it. Our government didn't build Xiaohuang's elder centre. Gongchandang is so poor and petty. The funds for our elders' centre were donated by many overseas villagers like your father."

In our dialogue, we also talked about the question of Hongkong's 1997.

Uncle Wen: "Will Hongkong return to China in 1997?"

Hok-Bin: "Yes, 1st of July in 1997."

Uncle Wen: "Are Hong Kong people scared 1997 or not?"

Hok-Bin: "I am not sure. But I think there's nothing to be afraid of."

Uncle Wen: "Do you think the social welfare will be maintained or not after 1997?"

Hok-Bin: "The Chinese government said everything will be maintained for 50 years."

Uncle Wen: "Do you believe that? Gongchandang is hard to predict (hao nan jiang)."

I did not know how to respond because I agreed with Uncle Wen to certain extent.

Dialogue II - On Eldercare

One afternoon when I stayed in Ku Village for second stay for fieldwork, I met Uncle Huang in the garden of pomelo. Uncle Huang was about 60 years old. He was a former brigade secretary and had retired after the government's division of land.

He invited me to his home. I was not on familiar terms with him. But I knew I had to visit him for the sake of limao (courtesy or politeness) because in the village it was not so common for senior villagers to invite a junior one unless they had good feelings towards you. After dinner, I kept my promise to visit him. The whole family was watching TV. As usual, we chatted about the daily life of the family. Once again, we came to the topic of eldercare in rural China as we were talking about the birth control policy. I was not surprised that they would ask about the family planning and elder services in Hongkong.

Uncle Huang: "Hok-Bin, is there any family planning (jihua shengyu) in Hongkong?"

Hok-Bin: "Sure there is. But it isn't compulsory. The government only encourages the family to make family planning."

Uncle Huang: "Ha Ha. In our country, the people can only have two children. After having the second birth, the women have to be sterilized like a cat (yan jiya, yan maogou). You know, after sterilization, no more pregnancies."

Suddenly his son, Haiping, interrupted into our dialogue and asked, "In your Hongkong, who supports the elderly after they cannot work?"

Hok-Bin: "They mainly depend on their family. They also get a pension from social welfare."

Haiping: "What about the ones without children?"

Hok-Bin: "I think they will live in a home for destitute old people."

Uncle Huang: "But our government does nothing for the aged people in the countryside. We haven't old-age pensions. We haven't any old-age welfare. That's why every family in the countryside wants to have a son. We have to depend our son for our old age. If not, we will be very pitiful when we become old. From the newspaper and television, I know many countries' governments provide welfare for the elderly and the elderly often enter into homes for the aged. They don't need to worry about their old age."

Uncle Huang's wife: "What a good government!"

Hok-Bin: "But I know that there is a home for destitute old people in Songnan."

Uncle Huang: "Yes, but that isn't a place for the elders to have a easy life. As I know, the elders still have to work there. They raise pigs, grow vegetables and so on. Basically, they still depend on themselves."

Uncle Huang's wife: "They are really pitiful! They have to work until they die."

Dialogue III - On Education

Sister Xue-mei had been accepted by the Teachers University of South China in Guangzhou. I thought that her parents would be very happy because first it was an honourable thing, second their daughter had an opportunity to "churen toudi" (stand out among one's fellows). To them, "churen toudi" meant Xue-mei could change her status as rural resident to an urban resident and had a good state-arranged job in future. It is a dream of the villagers -- "urban life" and "high status job".

After dinner, I came to congratulate their family. When I dropped in their house, Uncle Chang and his wife were watching TV. I could not sense any happiness at all. But I still offered my congratulations.

Hok-Bin: "I am so happy to hear that Xue-mei will enter into Teachers University of South China. It is a very good college."

Uncle Chang's wife: "We are also very happy too. But it is just like one's hope come to naught (yichang huanxi yichang kong)."

Hok-Bin: "What's your meaning?"

Uncle Chang was still watching TV and his wife said: "If Xue-mei was admitted to a university, it would be a very good thing. But now the situation is different."

Hok-Bin (puzzled): "What's different?"

Uncle Chang: "Now the education system has changed. There are different kinds of university student. Some study the zhuanke (diplomas course), some study the benke (undergraduate course); some are dadao fenshuxian (arriving mark line), some are zifei (self supporting), while others are gongsi baosong (recommended and supported by the company or working unit)..."

Hok-Bin: "What kind of student is Xue-mei? What's the difference?"

Uncle Chang's wife: "She is in the diploma's course and self-supporting. The difference is that such student cannot change their resident status and cannot get a job assignment from the government."

Hok-Bin: "Really?"

Uncle Chang's wife: "Yes, the school fee is very expensive. We have to spend about 8,000 per year, but with no guarantee of a job. After three years, she still has to find a job by herself. The government really cheats us to death. If we knew the policy had been changed, we wouldn't send Xue-mei to university."

Hok-Bin: "Which subject does she study?"

Uncle Chang: "English."

Hok-Bin: "Don't worry. English is a good subject. Now there are so many foreign companies in China. They often recruit people good in English."

I could only try to comfort Xue-mei's parents, but I knew she still had to face the uncertainty of the labour market. As a staff member of the village hydroelectric station, Uncle Chang earns less than 200 yuan per month. His wife is the only full labourer in farming activities. As they said, the government gives no financial support for the self-supporting students. They really face economic hardships at this stage of family cycle.

Dialogue IV - On Education

Brother Xian suddenly returned home from the Jia-ying University in Meizhou. The next day he returned to the University quickly. I guessed that something happened. Today I met his mother. I tried to investigate what happened in their family. But she told me that it was nothing. Brother Xian only came home to get some money for some extra expenses at school. His mother could not help complaining about the heavy burden of her son's education.

Brother Xian's mother: "Now the expenditure on education becomes higher and higher. Xian last week just got 300 hundreds for living expenses. This week he comes to get another 300 hundreds to buy the headphones."

Hok-Bin: "Why does he need to buy the headphone?"

Xian's mother: "He is studying English in the university. He said it was required by the university."

Hok-Bin: "How much have you spent on Xian's education?"

Xian's mother: "About 8,000 yuan per year. You know, our total income is just about 18,000 yuan per year. His expenses occupy a large proportion of our income."

Hok-Bin: "Is there any subsidy or grant or loan from the government?"

Xian's mother: "You must be joking (Kaiwanxiao). I have never heard about it. Today's government doesn't care whether we live or die. "

Hok-Bin: "But how about the student from poor families? Can they afford to study in university?"

Xian's mother: "Nowadays, no money, no study. What about Hongkong's children? Do you need to pay for school fees? "

Hok-Bin: "The Hongkong government provides nine years of free education for the children. Poor families still can apply for a living subsidy."

Xian's mother: "How good of your government! The Gongchandang also said they provide free education, but actually the school fee is higher than before."

She stopped for a while and asked me: "How about Hongkong's university students? How much are their fees?"

Hok-Bin: "I am not sure of the current university fees. But a student can apply for a grant and loan from government."

Xian's mother: "How about you? Do you need to pay much money?"

Hok-Bin: "Ah... My situation is quite different."

Dialogue V - On Medical Service

One morning, I got up at nine o'clock as usual. The difference was that Uncle Si did not go out to work. He stayed at home and was reading the newspaper. I looked out the window. It was a sunny day. I heard Uncle Si had a dry cough.

Hok-Bin: "Hi, Uncle Si, what's wrong with you today?"

Uncle Si: "I feel sick. I think I have a cold."

Hok-Bin: "You better go to see a doctor in hospital."

Uncle Si: "Doctor? Hospital? The world has changed. No money, no talk. Seeing the doctor in hospital will cost you a lot of money. The simple medicine for a common cold will cost a very high price. There're many other additional charges such as a procedure charge and other items you don't understand. It is often said the hospital was 'jiusi fushang' (healing the wounded and rescuing the dying), but now the hospital only heals the people for money. Gongchandang are only concerned with the money. Last time your aunt (his wife) had a massive gastric hemorrhage. When we sent her to hospital, the first thing they asked was whether we were able to pay the operation fee. We had to pay the fee first, and then they gave the operation. What kind of world is this? I didn't think there was any public hospital like this."

Hok-Bin did not know how to reply

Uncle Si: "How about Hongkong's hospitals?"

Hok-Bin: "In Hongkong, there are different kind of hospitals. One type is public hospital and the other is private hospital. The private hospital is also very expensive. The charge of public hospital is quite low. If you are aged people, you are basically free of charge by claiming via social welfare department."

Uncle Si: "The Gongchandang always criticizes the bad side of capitalism. But I think the capitalist countries are better than socialist countries in this aspect."

Dialogue VI - On Medical Service

Many people gathered at Uncle Xiang's house after dinner. No one had any pre-set topic. They only joined together for cultivating guanxi and whiling away their time (xiaomo shijian). I cannot remember who began the conversation of 'shui

huo' (fake). And then villagers were from criticism of general fakes to criticism of fake medicine and poor medical service in China.

Uncle Xiang: "Have you read the newspaper in recent days? There are a lot of fakes in market."

Uncle Si: "Yes, fake chemical fertilizers, fake electrical equipment, fake cigarettes, so on and so forth are filling the market. My son bought a washing machine last month. When they opened the package box, they found the model in the menu was different from the model on the machine. They couldn't do anything because they said 'goods cannot be returned after leaving the store' (*huowu chumen, shu bu tuihuo*)."

Xiang's wife: "What gall! (*da dan*). It's robbery in fact."

Uncle Si: "Today's society is very *luan* (chaotic). People dare to do any wicked things."

Uncle Dung: "It's government's *zeren* to keep the order and attack these criminals."

Uncle Xiang: "Don't mention about our government. Don't you know what's 'collusion between the official and businessmen' (*guanshan goujie*)? If there is no support of the corrupt officials, the wicked businessmen wouldn't dare to do these things."

Uncle Si: "Now conscience is unworthy. It is reported that some hospitals gave fake medicine to the patients. It really does people a great harm."

Uncle Xiang: "It is also due to money. Fake medicine is cheaper."

Xiang's wife: "Yet the price of medicine inflates a lot. Last week I got some cold tablets from public hospital. Comparing the price from the private medicine store, I found the price nearly double."

Uncle Si: "The *Gongchandang* only recognizes money. Their hospital opens for the rich people, but not the poor."

It is impossible for me to record down all the everyday conversations the villagers had among themselves and with me. But it is possible to suggest that through their fragmented everyday voices, it is villagers who make comments on their government; it is villagers who identify their self-interest; it is villagers who speak out their ideal of "good government"; it is villagers who draw upon a rich variety of knowledge in constructing their political model. It was also through their daily conversation that their sense of insecurity and risk was conveyed. In their daily conversations, the villagers did not often directly use the term "*zeren*", but they repeatedly pointed out what kind of social security the CCP government failed to provide. In the eyes of villagers, providing social security is the government's *zeren*. A government that failed to provide these services would be regarded as a bad

government. The villagers' idea of social security comes partly from their experience in Maoist China as well as their knowledge of other foreign governments, e.g. Singapore and Hong Kong.

In China the term social security (*shehui baozhang*) is one of the most inclusive of terms to refer variously to social protection, income maintenance and welfare, educational and health services and provision of public utilities to meet the need of the elderly, children, the poor and disable (Leung, 1995). In Ku villagers' daily conversation, time and again, their definition and scope of social security usually refers to income support for the elderly in the form of pensions and/or allowances, social relief for the very poor, subsidies to reduce the cost of health care and education and fees charged for public utilities, e.g. hospital. In the face of greater vulnerability and uncertainty due to the rural reforms, Ku villagers constantly felt that income maintenance or "money in their pocket" was threatened by rising costs of services and lack of protection in times of illness or other need. Simultaneously, they sensed many of the time-honoured sources of security were also increasingly at risk. Their nostalgia for Mao's China revealed their sense of insecurity and discontent with the present reforms. Their own past experience under Mao was articulated to negate the present government who has forgotten its *zeren* for maintaining social security.

Employing History to Negate the Present

The fact was too obvious that the Maoist government had brought great suffering to the rural Chinese. In their everyday narratives, the chaos, hunger and revolutionary terror of land reform and the Cultural Revolution was still fresh in the old villagers' mind. Sometimes, intriguingly, there were some contradictions in their narration in which they praised the Maoist government. However, we should not make the mistake of thinking that villagers' praising the Mao's China implied they wanted to keep the commune system. Maoist past had become a sort of cultural code which was employed by the villagers to negate the present government and serve their own interest. As the villagers often said "...we don't care about communist government or *Guomindang* government. Whichever government can provide more benefits to us, we support."; "The changing of local government (they mean local administrative organization) brings nothing to us; I think today's government is worse

than the Maoist one"; "The Maoist government took care of the poor and elderly, today's government take care of the money."

It could not be denied that the Chinese Communists had heroically built up its image as saviour in resisting the ruling landlord class and the bureaucratic bourgeoisie, and opposing the occupation of the country by Japan. They also gained credit from their achievements in the first few years of the People's Republic. Selfless and principled service on the part of Communist officials further strengthened the image of the Communist Party as the "great liberator" of the people. By 1953, the restoration and reconstruction of the national economy, and the rural cooperative movement, which was also a big step forward in land reform, had proved to some extent successful. The provision of education, medical services and some social security had established the patron-client relationship between the socialist government and the villagers. For instances, in Mao's China, the collective also took care of the elderly who were childless and infirm. The government labeled this household as a "five guarantees household" (*wubao hu*). The household enjoyed the five guarantees of food, clothing, medical care, housing and burial expenses. On the aspect of public health, the medical service was not totally free in Mao's era, but the fee was relatively low. The hospital did not dare to make any extra charge because the state set the fees. Sometimes when the villagers really could not afford the medical fee, they could ask the brigade to issue a certificate of their financial difficulty, and then they could obtain the free service in the hospital. Moreover, there were young "bare foot doctors" (*cijiao yisheng*) encouraged by the socialist government to come to villages to serve the villagers. The old villagers still missed their selflessness although their medical knowledge was not as high as the formally trained doctors in hospitals. On the aspect of education, the villagers thought Deng's government had abandoned its *zeren*. As one villager said, "Although the [Maoist] government was not good enough, the government at least provided the basic medical service, free education and service to the elderly." Although schooling was not totally free, the fee was very low. The Maoist government also provided a schooling subsidy for the children coming from poor families.

The rural reform carried out after the death of Mao has changed the *guanxi* base between the villagers and the government. Although their living standard had

remarkably improved, they still sensed "something" lost, and this increased the feeling of insecurity in Deng's China. Previously, the state had provided minimal relief in poor regions but its funding resources for even minimal "five guarantees" social security were threatened by a semi-crumbling fiscal system. The commune had been dismantled and with it the former collective support for the elderly and disabled while subsidies for health care and education had either decreased or were now non-existent. In their absence it was left to the peasant household to provide the main forms of support and meet the costs of services. At the same time one of the most important repercussions of reform has been the increase in the number of nuclear households made up of the younger generation and their children after the introduction of stringent family planning policies.

The privatization and commercialization of the previous public organization further increased villager's feeling of insecurity and dissatisfaction. In the reform era, the tuition fee inflated quickly in several years. The tuition fee of a kindergarten child and primary student was about 100 yuan and 500 yuan separately. The tuition fee of a secondary student also increased to about 1,000 yuan. The tuition fee of a university student was about 10,000 yuan, which really put a financial burden on villagers. According to villagers, there was a deposit system, so that each primary student was required to pay a deposit of 50 yuan and each secondary student was required to pay 100 yuan. If the students did not pay the deposit, they would not be allowed to enter school. Villagers called this the "high priced education" (*gaojia shu*). Whenever they talked about education, the villagers sighed over their children's heavy school fees. Uncle Nian-hua expressed his dissatisfaction with the current education system as below:

... Nowadays, if you have money, you can enter any school you wanted. Songkou secondary school is a famous school in Mei county. Before, only the good students can enter this school. But now if you can pay 1800 yuan, even if your score is below the score line, you still can enter Songkou secondary school. It is unimaginable that schools have become business firms.

Most of the villagers, with great effort, were capable of affording the various school fees such as book charges, snack fees, renovation fees and so on, but they often said the school fee almost made them "*chuan bu guo qi*" (out of breath). They began to

question about the *zeren* of the government and criticized the commercialized education in a socialist country.

On the aspect of public health, after the rural reform in the 1980s, the government also no longer provided free health services to the villagers. The increasing cost of medical service made the villagers out of breath too. Time and again I heard Ku villagers' complaint about the high charge of medical service. The primary teacher, Wen-ying (40 years old) expressed his opinion on today's medical service:

Although the villagers get more income in planting the pomelo, their life is still hard. Any family member laid up will influence the economy of the family. You know the charge of medical service is so high today. Every visit to a doctor cost several ten yuans. Some families owed others' money because one or two family members were laid up.

In our conversation, I often heard the old villagers condemn the money worship, moral degeneration and corrupt social values in Deng's era, while they praised some of the good late doctors in Songkou hospital. Uncle Si expressed his nostalgia as follows:

In the past, the doctors cured the patient not for money but for their morality and their conscience. Healing the wounded and rescuing the dying was their first principle. I remember there were two doctors in Songkou hospitals. They were really good men. When the villagers couldn't afford the fee, they gave them free service. Today money has become the main concern of the doctors. What's happened to the manners and morals of the time!

The monetization of state organizations was due to the fiscal reform in the 1980s. By the mid-1980s, the state enterprises and organizations became fiscally self-sufficient. Provinces, municipalities, prefectures, counties, and townships were subject to a bottom-up revenue-sharing system that required localities to submit only a portion of their revenues to the upper levels and then allowed them to retain all, or at least most, of the remainder. If the organization can earn more money, their staff will get more bonus (*jiangjing*). So most of the state enterprises such as the schools and hospitals charge high fees for maximizing profit. They also invent different ways for making money.

The financial difficulty also made the local government or village organizations fail to fulfill their responsibility for school construction and repairs. In Meixian, most of the funds came from the villagers' families and donations from overseas villagers. For example, Songxi primary school was built by overseas villagers. The funds for extensions and repairs all came from the donations of overseas villagers. There were many other aspects of *zeren* that the villagers thought the government failed to fulfill in the reform era. The local government and its administrative organizations in village was often criticized as losing its function to manage public utilities like irrigation projects and road paving. The failure of cadres of the District Administrative Committee and the Villagers' Committee was often attributed to the shortage of public funds. For road paving, most of the needed funds came from the donations of overseas villagers and collections from individual households. The villagers were very dissatisfied with the fund collection because the villagers think that it was the local government's *zeren* to pave the way.

The return of the "social evils" such as prostitution (*piao*), gambling (*du*), corruption (*tanwu*), and rising rate of crimes has discredited the socialist state. To the old villagers, in Mao's China, "*shehui fengqi*" (social conduct) was so good. But *gaige kaifang* of Deng made the society so evil and immoral. They told me that in Songkou town, most of the hair salons were "*gua yangtou, mai gourou*" (hanging up a sheep's head and selling dog meat, i.e. trying to palm off something inferior to what it purports to be). In fact, they were running a prostitution business. There are increasing numbers of young people engaged in gambling and robbery.

In this social environment, in Ku Village, Mao's words have been brought up again and again by the old villagers. Quotes from Mao included "serve the Chinese people to heart and soul," "Our duty is to hold ourselves responsible to the people," "Serve the people" and so on. "Serve the people" (*wei renmin fuwu*) was the famous slogan in Mao, which was Mao's call to his government and cadres. In daily chatting, the villagers would adopt Mao's words to criticize the current government, such as the following quotation:

Mao said that the government had to serve the people heart and soul. But what about today's government? They just serve themselves. Our money serves for their pocket.

This was not a unique phenomenon in Ku Village. In the late 1980s, there was a great mass fervor (*rechao*) of nostalgia in China. As Weller accurately observed, "This has been a problem for the current nostalgia campaign, as a recent T-shirt craze showed. Some T-shirts bore radical Maoist slogans from the Cultural Revolution days. Quotes from Mao included 'Never forget class struggle,' 'A single spark can start a prairie fire,' and 'Sweep away all vermin'" (Weller, 1994:211). Besides, "Lei Feng spirit" was re-advocated and Mao's writings were re-printed in the late 1980s.⁵ There was another intriguing instance of popular co-option of official code in Meixian's big streets and small lanes (*dajie xiaoxian*). I noticed the drivers liked to hang a small photo of Mao on the front window of cars. The drivers told me that they believed Mao's photo had magic power to drive out the evil and to avoid ill luck (*quxie bixiong*) and to be efficacious in preventing accidents. Who are the evils and what is the ill luck are interesting questions we can further explore. But the resurgence of Mao's words and nostalgia seems not to be natural. Maybe the participants in the nostalgia intended to remind us of "something" or reaffirm "something".

5.4. Villagers' Ideal Type of Good Cadres

In Ku Village, I frequently heard the villagers' commentary on their cadres. In their discourse, they not only disparaged the functions of the local cadres, but also denigrated their cadres' images. These voices forced me to think: what does a good cadres look like in their mind? How do they constitute their ideal type of cadre?

Official Discourse of Good Cadres and Bad Cadres

Since the rural reform, some local administrative organizations at the village level have gradually lost their functions. The misconduct of village cadres has further lost the villagers' trust and respect as well. The CCP government is aware that the low prestige of local cadres has influenced policy implementation. Therefore, since

⁵ . Lei Feng was a young soldier who was set up by Mao as a model of good CCP membership. After he died in a car accident, Mao advocated to learn from Lei Feng, which became a national wide campaign.

the late 1980s, for the sake of maintaining the legitimacy of its representatives in local society, the Sixth Plenary Session of the Thirteenth Central Committee passed a resolution to strengthen the relationship between the Communist Party and the people. The official newspapers at each level reprinted the whole Resolution (Jiaying Daily, April 22nd 1990), in which the CCP government pointed out the importance of establishing a good relationship between the CCP and the masses in the reform era. It also attributed the problems in the relationship between the CCP and the masses to the local level,

... Now some leaders are far removed from the masses and reality. They only give the orders without considering the situation of the masses. They do not engage in practical work and do their work perfunctorily. Some even resort to deception. They report only the good news and not the bad, listen to the good and not the bad. They are not concerned about the local situation and the people's difficulties. These harmful working styles have seriously cut themselves off from the masses and become an obstacle to CCP cause. It is the time to make change seriously... (Jiaying Daily, April 22nd 1990, my own translation).

There were different kinds of solutions proposed, e.g. unifying ideological work, cadres going down to the grass-roots level, spreading propaganda of state policies among the cadres, and so on.⁶ In 1996, the CCP government re-emphasized on the "local construction", in their term, "*jiceng jianshi*". In the official newspaper, we can know that there are several important tasks defined by the CCP government in the *jiceng jianshi*, which including strengthening the village party-branch; building up a good image of village cadres; improving the quality of local leadership; developing potential successors of CCP members (Meizhou Daily, February 21, 1996).

Through the official mass media, e.g. TV programs and newspapers, the official version of "good cadres" was also conveyed to the public. For instance, in an official research report entitled "*Nongmin Xinmuzhong de 'Lingtouren'*" (The "Good leaders" in Villagers' Mind), it summarized eight special qualities what the good local leaders must have in the new age of reform:

⁶ . Readers interested in the detail of the document can read "The Central Committee of the CCP's Resolution about how to Strengthen the Relationship between the Party and the Masses" in *Jiaying Daily*, April 22nd 1990.

- 1) Good local leaders must unite the villagers and lead them to the way of getting rich.
- 2) Good local leaders must have technical and professional knowledge which can help the villagers to solve their technical problems.
- 3) Good local leaders must be close (*tiexin*) to the villagers and capable at ideological work.
- 4) Good local leaders must be creative and have enterprising spirits to explore economic opportunities.
- 5) Good local leaders must be able to develop the collective economy.
- 6) Good local leaders must have a head for business and have good communication skills.
- 7) Good local leaders must be good at management.
- 8) Good local leaders must be willing to offer themselves to the villagers and become the servants of the villagers.

(Meizhou Daily, February 1st, 1992).

The CCP government in the post-reform era paid much attention to the cadre's capability of developing the local economy and making money. Leading villagers to "get rich" was defined as one of the important *zeren* of the village cadres. In Meixian's official newspapers and TV programmes, those village cadres and party secretaries who were able to lead the village to walk out of poverty and develop the rural economy were construed by the government as models of "good cadres" in the new age. They were praised and honored in glorifying meetings (*biaoyang dahui*) held by the county governments. The local leaders were called to learn from these good models. In an officially published book entitled *Meixian Shatian Pomelo*, twenty-two good cadres' stories were recorded. All the stories talked about how the village cadres successfully developed the village economy (Wen & Cheng, 1992).

On the other hand, the official media criticized and judged the model of bad cadres. Corruption, which has stirred widespread public anger, was highlighted as a serious problem in reform era. To stop the corruption, the CCP government

repeatedly attacked the miscreant cadres in the mass media. In the TV news, sometimes the villagers were able to hear of corrupt cadres at different levels being arrested and sentenced. In 1996, when I was staying in Ku Village, it was reported by the Guangdong TV that the vice-mayor of Chaoyang city in Guangdong was arrested and sentenced to death. The official report announced that the vice-mayor had misappropriated an "extraordinarily huge amount of money" and criticized his actions as causing "huge losses of public property". The villagers were happy to hear this news and they discussed this case among themselves. Their comments were the following:

"The government did a good thing this time."

"This guy got what he deserved."

"As an official, he knowingly violated the law. I can only say he deserves punishment (*zuiyou yingde*)."

"In China, there are many corrupt cadres. The government just kills the chicken to frighten the monkey (*shaji jinghou*). I think he was an unlucky scapegoat."

...

In the reform era, in the official press, it was also reported that the local cadres violently mistreated villagers in implementing state policies, such as birth control. The mass media criticized these cadres who damaged the image of CCP government and destroyed the relationship between the government and the public, in their words, *ganqun guanxi*. It also attributed the failure of the state policies to the misbehavior of the bad cadres. Thus the CCP government demanded that rural leaders meet a list of expectations: extract resources without using force, enforce birth control through persuasion, conduct democratic elections while preventing the selection of "untrustworthy" cadres, develop the village economy by relying on self-exploration. In Guangdong, for improving the *ganqun guanxi* and earning the credit from the public, the government set up boxes for accusation letters (*jianju xiang*) for the people to expose the bad behaviour of cadres. Anyone who wanted to complain of a local cadre could anonymously put an accusation letter in the box. Although the Ku villagers knew that they could make complaints this way, nobody really tried because they doubted the feasibility of the accusation box. Also they did not want to cause any trouble when they had no certainty of success.

In short, although the official version of "good cadres" and "bad cadres" is not necessary same as villagers' view, they have seen television programs and read newspapers that depict appropriate work styles and model behavior by village cadres. What they learned has become one of their frames of reference in constructing their model of "good cadres" and "bad cadres". By adopting the information provided by the official press, the villagers develop their own criteria for judging their local leaders. In their daily conversation, I found that the villagers sometimes employed the official language to judge the village leaders (I will discuss this later).

"Bao Qing Tian" as an Ideal Type of Good Cadres

From 1994 to 1996, a long TV series "Bao Qing Tian" suddenly became popular in China. The series was reproduced and rebroadcasted by different TV stations in Hongkong and Taiwan. Some seminars were held to discuss the "Bao Qing Tian" phenomena in Hongkong's academics. I think that stories of Bao Qing Tian, also known as "Bao Gong", were well known by Chinese. His stories have been presented in traditional operas, movies and television programmes time and again. But it has never been a craze such as in recent years. When I returned to Ku Village in 1995, I found this TV series was also welcomed by the villagers who discussed the stories in their daily conversation.

Baogong was a civil official in the Song Dynasty. According to traditional novels, he was one of the gods, named Wenqu Star, in heaven. In the Song Dynasty, there were many corrupt and venal officials who often perverted justice for bribes and suppressed the common people. The cries of discontent rose all round. When the grumbling reached heaven, the Emperor of Heaven was very angry. So he appointed Wenqu Star to be born as human being for the sake of assisting the king of Song Dynasty. Bao Zhen was the name of Wenqu Star on the earth. After he became an official in the Ministry of Punishment (*xingbu*) of the Song Dynasty, people called him Bao Gong. "Gong" in Chinese means official. He was appointed as the head of the Prefecture of Kai-feng-- Kai-feng was the capital of Song. Kai-feng *fu* was similar to the court of justice or Supreme People's Court in Beijing. Baogong was not only strict and impartial in judging cases and meting out rewards and punishments, he was also fearless with powerful officials, even the emperor and the imperial family. In

Kai-feng *fu*, he punished many corrupt and evil officials, and he also defended the poor against injustice. So people offered him a good name -- Bao Qing Tian. "Qing Tian" can be directly translated into "blue sky". That means that when every mistreated and unjust case came to Bao Gong's hand, the justice would come out clearly like the "blue sky". The stories of Bao Gong were spread far and wide from then to nowadays. Bao Qing Tian became the symbol of justice and honest; and the savior of the poor. He was also constructed and viewed as the enemy of corrupt officials.

Associating the great mass fervor of Bao Qing Tian with the current nostalgia campaign in China, it was not surprising that the long Taiwan television series - Bao Qing Tian - suddenly became popular in the village.⁷ I think that the sudden resurgence of Mao, Lei feng and other traditional symbols such as Bao Qing Tian cannot be thought of as natural or ridiculous. If we read these resurgence within the context of serious corruption, stagnant economic development, and the widening gap between the rich and the poor since the mid-1986, we will find that the story of Bao Qing Tian relates to the recognition of the permanent problem of corruption in Chinese government and ubiquitous injustice in Chinese history. It also reveals the hope of villagers who expect there are some good officials like Bao Gong who will punish the evil officials and save the poor. Bao Qing Tian has become the model of a good official who is just and honest in performing his official duty; serving and standing for the interests of the poor; being selfless; and having high quality and talent.⁸ In everyday discourse, the villagers judged their village cadres according to these basic and simple criterion. Of course, I cannot deny that sometimes the judgment involved the villagers' personal preferences.

⁷. This series was very popular in Hongkong during these three years. It was very special that the television series could maintain popularly for three years in Hongkong. This television series was also presented in mainland China.

⁸. Baogong had a high qualification of education because he passed the official examination and entitled as "*Jinshi*".

New Model of "Good Cadres" in the Reform Era

The villagers' "good cadres" are never a total copy of the traditional model of good officials like Baogong. There have been many new factors added into the model of "good cadres" under the context of economic reform. The factors include the capability of making money for the village, of protecting the interests of village, of providing job opportunities and so on. The local cadres of "developed" villages in Pearl River Delta (PRD) have become the new models of "good cadres".

The PRD was the official model of Chinese rural industrialization. According to the discourse of the Chinese government, the PRD had successfully attracted foreign investments and achieved a high level of industrialization in which many foreign invested factories, joint venture factories and rural enterprises had been well established (Gu, 1985). The local government became powerful in the PRD because firstly they are capable of extracting a portion of the income of rural enterprises; secondly they were able to intervene in the management of enterprises and the use of profits to promote collective interests; and thirdly they redistributed that income to provide basic social services and care for members of villages (Oi, 1990). The local government's ability to maintain effective control over the financial flow of village and township industries lies in the terms of the contract-responsibility system for rural enterprises. The rural enterprises and factories had to pay taxes to the state, rent and management and surcharges to the village or township government that owns the enterprises. So many village and township governments tried to maximize their revenues by promoting the development of rural industry and enterprises. The village leaders and township heads functioned like corporate boards of directors who made decisions ranging from spending, investments, and loans to hiring, and also made provisions to assist their enterprises in acquiring credits and needed inputs. They also controlled patronage, providing many job opportunities, impressive services and benefits to the villagers. As most of the rural enterprises and factories occupied land of the villagers, the villagers became shareholders of the rural enterprises and got bonuses every year.

Through the mass media, and through the visits of villagers who worked in factories of the PRD, the villagers in Ku Village appropriated much information about what the village leaders in rich areas acted like. They compared their village leaders

with other village leaders. The following quotations showed their admiration as well as expectations of the "good cadres".

Sister Lan: My son [working in Zhuhai] told me the villages in Zhuhai were very rich. Their village head cooperated with foreign businessmen and set up the village enterprises. Their villagers can get bonuses several thousand yuan every year...

Their local governments also provide welfare for the elderly. They also provide the subsidies for the villagers' education...

Brother Xin: I don't know when our village can develop to the extent of the PRD's village. I always think maybe one day all these fields will become factories. But I also doubt there is any foreign businessman willing to invest in our remote village.

Uncle Huang: Their [PRD] villages can develop so well because they have leaders with great ability. But our leaders are ongdingding (foolish and stupid) and silingsi (useless).⁹

As I know, the cadres of the Xiaohuang Administrative District Committee intended to imitate the PDR's village for setting up village enterprise. They planned to establish a cement factory, but the project was turned down because they lacked the funds and support from overseas villagers. The experience of the PRD's village was still distant and detached from the Kus. The neighbouring villages became a significant reference point, too. One day I visited Sister Hui with Uncle Si. Hui was Uncle Si's youngest daughter who married to Pingshang Village which was not so far to Ku Village. During lunch time, Uncle Si tried to learn the situation of Pingshang Village from Sister Hui.

Uncle Si: "Do your village committee distribute huahong (dividends) each year?"

Hui: "Yes, we do."

Uncle Si: "We haven't got any bonus from our village committee for many years. He didn't announce the financial situation of the collective fund. Even if we haven't dividend, we still want to know the financial situation of our village. But since he's become village head, nobody know what happen."

Sister Hui: "Really? We still can get the dividend from our village committee."

Uncle Si: "How much?"

Sister Hui: "There is no exact amount. Depends on the income of our village committee. Last month we got 300 yuan."

Uncle Si: "Great! Not bad!"

⁹ . *ongdingding* and *silingsi* are Hakka dialect. I could not find the suitable words in Mandarin to replace them.

Any other village's experiences can become their information for comparison. Now to the Kus, good cadres not only include the special quality like a good traditional official, they also have the characteristics of entrepreneurs who know how to do business or make money for their villages.

Village Cadres in the Eyes of Ku Villagers

The restructuration of the local administrative organizations seems to bring paralysis or semi-paralysis to the village organs, e.g. the ADC and villagers' committee. The obvious phenomenon is that the local cadres no longer intervene in the daily production of the villagers, and the village organs are no longer able to act as bodies which provide services and benefits to their village members or to manage public affairs. The remaining function of the village organs is to transmit state policies, tax collection, and implement birth control. The ADC and the villagers' committee are continuously subordinated to township officials as before. They cannot refuse the township government's directives and assignments. In some sense, they are still extensions of the state into villages and mouthpieces of the government. However, the dilemma is that there is no longer any guarantee that they can fulfill these tasks smoothly as before because they cannot obtain any financial support from the government. The local organizations became fiscally self-sufficient after the fiscal reform in the mid-1980s which aimed first to reduce the central state's own financial burden and second to provide incentives for local authorities to promote economic development. Therefore, those villagers' committees and the ADC without any enterprises and industries often cannot fund the welfare services and public affairs which have been defined as their *zeren* in the Constitution. Because of this, their authority has been undermined.

Although the institutional arrangement has been redesigned, the job descriptions rewritten, and the working relationship between the village cadres and villagers has changed, the villagers' expectation toward the village cadres remains the same. Situated in this awkward position, some local cadres sometimes choose to collude with the state and sometimes choose to collude with the villagers. In the villagers' everyday discourse, time and again I heard their comments about village

cadres. They demand the cadres to fulfill their *zeren*, which defined by the villagers for serving their own interest. Those village leaders who fulfill their *zeren* would be regarded by the villagers as "good cadres" and vice versa. What the villagers say about their village leaders was not necessary true. It could be libelous. The point I want to demonstrate is that making up stories and rumours is one of the tactics the villagers adopt to delegitimize the "bad cadres". Their comments also reveal their conception of "good cadres" and "bad cadres".

Songsheng

Songsheng, a female, was 52 years old. She had become the party secretary of the Xiaohuang brigade and Administrative District in 1980. In the eyes of the villagers, she was not a good cadre because she was one who did not represent the interests of the village. To Ku villagers, it was their leaders' *zeren* to speak for them when their interests were threatened by the state policies, e.g. taxation and birth control. However, Songsheng often strictly carried out the state policies, especially at the high tide of the campaign. The villagers told me that she enthusiastically assisted the government to terminate illegal pregnancies and to compel sterilization. What she did hurt her *ganqing* and *guanxi* with the villagers. The villagers damned her with dirty language. Songsheng explained that it was her *zeren* to implement the state policies, but the villagers argued that, as a village leader, her *zeren* was to protect the interests of the villagers. Songsheng knew that the villagers did not welcome her and she tried to modify her way of work. She usually kept one eye opened and one eye closed. The change in her working style did not earn respect and credit from the villagers. The villagers often said of themselves -- "*nongmin* are so stubborn. When we have formed an opinion, it is difficult to change our minds."

The villagers treated her as a bad cadre also because she lacked the art of leadership, which the villagers attribute to her low educational level. Like the official press, the villagers often emphasized the level of education of their leaders. As Uncle Wen said, "Now the cadres no longer rely on their red class origin, but on their level of education (*zhishi shuiping*) and their capability (*benshi*)."

To the Ku villagers, the level of education is related to capability. According to them, Songsheng went only to primary school. To them, that means she is without capability. When the villagers

mentioned Songsheng, they shook their heads and expressed their discontent over her performance as a local cadre. For instance, Uncle Si criticized her as "*mei wenhua, mei shuiping*" (lacking in education, lacking in leadership). He also complained about her irresponsibility (*bu fu zeren*) and gave me an example:

In our village, many public lands have been illegally occupied by the villagers. I complained about it to Songsheng. But she asked me to tell Wuqiang. I was very angry with her shirking her duty. It is her *zeren* (responsibility). She has the *zeren* to deal with it. How can she shift the *zeren* to other person?

The Ku villagers were also discontented with Songsheng's unfair management of village affairs. In 1995, an event regarding the public fish pond once again disappointed the villagers. The public fishpond in Ku Village was contracted out to individual household every three years. When the contract was to expire, according to the regulation, it was necessary to have open bidding by the villagers. However, this did not really happen. One day, I heard several women discussing something about the public fishpond in low voices. I asked them what happened. They told me that Lian (a villager in Ku Village) got the contract of the public fishpond again this year without going through public bidding. That was Songsheng's decision. They thought it was unfair and unjust. They also questioned her right to intervene into the affairs of Ku Village because the fishpond was not the public property of the ADC, but the property of Ku Village. In this event, justice and skill in management were the criteria the villagers employed to judge Songsheng.

Slander was a popular means of the villagers to delegitimize the local cadres whom they defined as the bad cadres. In Ku villagers' daily conversation and dialogue, they gossiped about useless and irresponsible cadres like Songsheng. There was a joke about Songsheng told among the villagers, which really denigrated her image as a local cadre. I forgot who told this joke first, but it was circulated among the villagers.

The State Railway Bureau (SRB) planned to construct the Mei-Kan railway which will pass through Ku Village and the neighbouring villages. Some houses, fruit trees and fields of the villages will have to be removed. Songsheng's new house will be removed too. When the staffs of SRB came to investigate in the villages, Songsheng told them that she was the party secretary of the village and requested the staff for an exception in her favour to change the route of the railway. The

staff told her: "Even if you are Deng Xiao-ping, the house still has to be removed." The villagers ridiculed her over that: "Ha! Ha! She treats her status as high as Jiang Ze-min (the current president of China) does. Yes, she is number one, but count backwards."

Not only did the villagers look down on her, other local cadres like Yueshun (the accountant of the ADC) also made similar comments about her:

What a party secretary, with such low education and quality. Look at her ugly handwriting, just like a primary school pupil. She only knows how to indulge in idle talk, but doesn't have a practical and realistic style of work. She only knows how to follow other people, but doesn't know how to proceed from the actual situation.

Since Songsheng was not elected by the villagers, Yueshun was not convinced by her supervision. He time and again expressed his discontent to me over the unfair election system:

We are elected by the villagers, but she [the party secretary] is elected by less than twenty party members. No matter how good or bad their performance, we cannot make any change. It is characteristic of Chinese socialism...

...you know, she represents the communist party, so no one can challenge her, even if her performance is very poor.

Songsheng's appointing of her personal favorites as village leaders also made the villagers very dissatisfied. Uncle Leng and Dongtou were both appointed by Songsheng as the heads of village committees. Because of that, the villagers identified them as Songsheng's *tong yihuo* (same group). In the villagers' view, Uncle Leng and Dongtou were not ideal candidates to be village heads.

Uncle Leng

Uncle Leng was 60 years old. He was sold to Ku Village from Chauzhou (Chewchau) when he was two years old. As he was an adopted son, he was discriminated against by other villagers and treated as an inferior. In the Maoist era, due to his Red family origin, he was chosen by the brigade as a team leader of the people's militia and joined the Communist Party. But according to some old villagers, he began to take revenge on villagers who had bullied him. Since then, his *guanxi* with other villagers had become worse.

Uncle Leng was appointed by Songsheng as the village head in the rural reform's era. According to Songsheng, she appointed him not only because Uncle Leng was a Communist Party member, but also because he was an obedient and honest person. The villagers had a different perspective on him. They thought he was lacking in ability to act as a leader since he only had primary school education. I heard Yueshun's remark about him as follows:

At the end of every year, the village heads have to report the income and expenditures of the village to me. I don't understand why she [Songsheng] appointed such people [Uncle Leng] as a village head. He has no mind of responsibility and has no prestige among the masses. You know, every year he is the last one to submit the report form. The data of your village is often incomplete.

Yueshun also commented that Uncle Leng was lacking in ability to implement the state policies. He said most of the time Uncle Leng could not fulfil the tasks they had given him. I think his inability in doing tasks is related to his bad relationship with the fellow villagers. The uncooperation of the villagers made his task difficult to fulfil. So Uncle Leng showed no enthusiasm in carrying out tough jobs. As he said, they were "*chili bu taohao*" (entailing strenuous effort but without appreciation). He also was indifferent to village affairs, e.g. repairing the ancestral hall and paving roads. In the village, I found that he seldom participated in the public activities of the village such as funerals, ancestral worship, and so on. I tried to ask him why. But he avoided answering my questions directly and only told me all these things were "*mei yisi*" (meaningless). I thought that the important events of Ku villagers were meaningless to him perhaps because of his personal background. As an adopted son, he did not identify himself with the ancestors and kin of Ku and thus he was not interested in the affairs of the kin. When there was a conflict between the state and the village, he did not try to protect the interests of Ku Village.

To some villagers, Leng was guilty of bad conduct too. They told me some bad stories about Uncle Leng. Uncle Si shared with me some secrets between him and Leng.

Hok-Bin, I tell you. Don't believe this guy [Uncle Leng]. He isn't a good person. He did many bad things behind other people's backs. When he was a team leader of the people's militia in the collective era, he often stole other villagers' things. I remembered one night when I was sleeping, suddenly he knocked my door. He showed me a clock

which was stolen from another villager's home and asked me to sell it. I didn't dare to tell other people until now. He also often stole the property of the public.

Uncle Leng's son was also considered as immoral as he was. The villagers knew that his younger son often stole people's pomelo in the harvest season. When they complained to Uncle Leng, he often showed partiality to his son. That was the reason why the villagers thought he was not a fair person.

Some villagers even suspected that Uncle Leng embezzled public funds. According to government's regulations, the village head has to announce the financial report to the villagers every year. If there was a surplus in the collective funds, the villagers could get a dividend. But since Uncle Leng became the village head, there have been no announcements of the financial situation of the village, and the villagers received no more dividends. Corruption and embezzlement was often described by the official press as an unhealthy tendency of the local government. The villagers viewed their losing of dividends as the result of embezzlement of village leaders, too. Time and again I heard them grumble about Uncle Leng's hiding of the financial situation of the village committee. Some villagers, like Uncle Si, even demanded Songsheng to order Uncle Leng to disclose all expenditures. But their demand was ignored by Songsheng. Thereafter, the villagers refused to pay any fees to villagers' committee, even if the fee was collected for public affairs. They told me, "They (village cadres) collect the fee every year in the name of paving the road. But we don't know where the money goes. You see, the road is still un-walkable."

Dongtou

Dongtou, about 32 years old, was another one appointed by Songsheng as team leader. He graduated from junior middle school. The villagers said that he became the team leader because he had close *guanxi* with Songsheng. Villagers described Dongtou as good at boasting and toadying. He often licked Songsheng's boots by sending her gifts for exchanging the benefit in return. For example, in 1996 Songsheng contracted out the project of constructing the new office for the administrative district committee to Dongtou. So the villagers called him "a lackey of Songsheng".

In old villagers' opinion, Dongtou was not a good guy as he was fond of gambling and drinking. The villagers gave him bad names like drinking demon (*zui xian*) and gambling ghost (*du gui*). Everyday he gambled at cards with several young villagers until late at night. All the heavy work was put on the shoulders of his wife and brother. It seemed that gambling was the most important thing in his life -- more than his wife and children. His story became a big joke in the village.

One day when Dongtou was gambling, someone came to tell him that his wife was sent to hospital for childbirth. He just replied, "I know" and then continued his gambling. He stopped his gambling only when his mother came to berate him.

Besides his bad habits, in the villagers' opinion, he was not qualified as village leader because he was not a responsible person. Like Uncle Leng, Dongtou was indifferent to village affairs. He never acted as a leader in public activities, sometimes he even disappeared. Uncle Wen commented that:

How can he be our leader? He doesn't take *zeren* in anything. When we have problem, we don't know whom we can ask for help. It makes no difference to have him as our leader.

To the villagers, he is not a protective cadre because he only follows what Songsheng asks him to do. For example, when the township government asked the cadres of ADC to collect the tax of pomelo, he actively gave Songsheng a hand because village cadres would obtain the bonus if they could fulfill the task on time. This also aroused discontent among the villagers.

Yueshun

Yueshun, 55 years old, is the accountant of the administrative district committee. He came from a landlord family. His father was an official in the *Guomindang* government. He and his brothers all received high education. After 1949, his family suffered a lot in every political campaign in Mao's era. Basically he hated the Communist government and its party members. That is why he often criticized Songsheng's lack of leadership skills.

Yueshun seems to have good and close *guanxi* with other villagers. I often saw him playing cards with other villagers for fun. In the minds of the villagers,

Yueshun was a decent, honest and impartial person. When there was any dispute among the villagers, the villagers would ask him to mediate the dispute. For example, one night in Shanyu House, there was a serious quarrel between Uncle Xiang and Uncle Leng's family. Many villagers tried to mediate between the two quarreling parties. Nobody could state clearly the causes of the quarrel. But I still remembered the rude language Uncle Xiang used to play down the role of Leng. He shouted, "Shit! Don't think you are superior! You are just same as us." "Don't be fierce! I am not afraid of you. Go! Ask Yueshun to judge who is right and who is wrong. Village cadres, shameless!"

The following are also villagers' comments about Yueshun:

Aunt Zhen: Brother Yueshun is a good man. He dares to speak of the unfairness of the government, not like Songsheng.

Uncle Wen: Yueshun is not bad. He is quite fair in managing the affairs of village.

Brother Lian: If we have any problem, we will ask Brother Yueshun for assistance. He's quite helpful.

Yueshun was a cadre who was willing to listen to the villagers' opinions. When he thought their opinion was good, he would take it into consideration. In 1996, when Uncle Leng resigned, he nominated Wenming as the new village head of Ku Village because he had higher educational level (senior secondary school). Before he nominated Wenming, he went to seek advice from the old villagers. One day when I visited Yueshun with Uncle Si, Yueshun consulted Uncle Si's opinion about Wenming. Uncle Si replied, "Not bad, he and his brothers are ideal candidates for village head. But I don't know if he is willing to take up the post." In the end, Wenming finally became the village head in 1996.

The villagers also thought Yueshun was a man of great ability. Yueshun planted the pomelo trees as other villager households. Because of his good skill in planting, his production of pomelo was higher than the other households. So the villagers would come to ask for assistance when they faced a technical problem. He was also willing to share his experience with others. Yueshun also had the quality of an entrepreneur. He not only engaged in farming activities, but also participated in other business, e.g. trading pomelo and running groceries. He encouraged the young

villagers to explore ways of making money. When they faced the financial problems, Yueshun would give them a hand. So he earned the respect from the young villagers.

The villagers also told me that Yueshun was also one who dared to speak and act (*ganshuo ganwei*). When he thought the state policy was unreasonable, he would stand on the side of villagers and represent the difficulties of the villagers to the township. But if he considered state policy acceptable, he would seriously carry it out although he knew this would displease some of the villagers. For instance, on the issue of birth control, he showed his sympathy to the villagers; but on the pomelo tax collection, he criticized villagers' selfishness and stubbornness. So his position was ambivalent. I could not say he was welcomed by the villagers at every moment.

Wenming

Wenming was a man in his late thirties who was to become a team leader of Ku Village after Uncle Leng had retired. When the ADC appointed him as team leader, he insisted on holding a mass election. He knew that most villagers were discontented with Uncle Leng and Dongtou because they were not elected by the villagers. Although most of the Ku villagers often showed their indifference in cadres' election, when those people they disliked became the village heads, they would use "not elected by us" as an excuse to delegitimize their leadership. The villagers recalled that in the election meeting, most villagers accepted Wenming as their village head.

In the village, I often heard the old villagers spoke appreciatively of Wenming's enthusiasm in village affairs. "Wenming is very good. Now it is difficult to find a young man like him. He is very active and often takes the lead in village affairs," Aunt Xin-gu spoke highly of his leadership. For example, Wenming was one of the organizers in paving the roads of village, in which he actively mobilized the young villagers to contribute their labour to this project. When Uncle Liu died in June of 1996, he helped his family to organize the funeral. When Brother San was hurt in lopping trees, Wenming sent him to hospital and took care of his family. All of these things were recollected by the villagers. As they often said, "We clearly know who treats us well and who treats us bad."

Wenming also acted as a protective leader, standing for the interests of the village, when there were conflicts between the government and the villagers. In autumn of 1996, the policy of pomelo taxation was passed to the ADC by the township government. When the cadres of the ADC came to Ku Village to organize the mass meeting concerning tax collection, Wenming refused to cooperate. "Don't trouble the villagers. This is the season of harvest. I will inform them about the tax policy of pomelo," Wenming told Songsheng. He heard the villagers time and again complain about the pomelo tax, then he represented the villagers' difficulties to the ADC. "The harvest of pomelo is so bad this year. I don't think it is right to collect the tax from the villagers. You know, it will discourage their enthusiasm in production. Don't think they are rich. Some households' incomes are falling short of their expenditures (*rubu fuzhi*)", that's how Wenming spoke up for the villagers.

Wenming's personal qualities were also appreciated by the old villagers. In their view, this young man showed filial piety. He treated his parents and parents-in-law very well. In Ku Village, more and more young villagers liked to *fenjia* (divide up family property and live apart) from their parents when they got married. Wenming still lived with his parents. He told me that it was his *zeren* to take care of his parents who were in their seventies. He also respected the old villagers, and he humbly asked some old villagers' opinions when he faced problems. He said, "It is commonly said 'experience is wisdom'. I cannot deny old people are more experienced and knowledgeable than I." Filial piety and humility are personal quality the villagers highly appreciate.

To the young villagers, Wenming was one who had the code of brotherhood (*yiqi*). *Yiqi* is also a good personal quality in Chinese society. When the other young villagers needed his assistance, Wenming generously gave them a hand. I know Wenming helped several households work out their financial problems in investment production. Moreover, if the villagers had an emergency, he would send them to the township on his motorbike. In my conversation with Wenming, I found that he still had the traditional idea of "all are brothers at all corners of the land (*sihai zhinei jie xiongdi*)". It is brother's *zeren* to take care of other brothers.

In sum, from the villagers' comments, we can partly grasp how they view their village leaders, and we can comprehend what their view of "good cadres" and "bad cadres". Generally a "good cadre" must have good personal qualities which include a higher educational level, the code of brotherhood (*yiqi*), filial piety, selfishless, responsible, having the capability of making money, and so on. More important, the villagers thought a good cadre must fulfil their *zeren*, which is defined by the villagers as mediating the disputes between the villagers, managing things impartially, acting as the bridge between the government and villagers, protecting village interests, and so on. The villagers hated those cadres who treated their jobs in terms of their own profit and their aim as cadres was to maximize the returns from their positions and bailiwick, in their words, "*zhi gu ziji, bugu bieren de shihuo*" (only concern their own interest, but not another's death or life). The villagers were dissatisfied with these cadres' standing on the side of state for self-security when there was a conflict of interest between the state and the village. On the other hand, the villagers appreciated those cadres who enthusiastically participated in and acted as heads of public affairs. They regarded these village leaders as their protectors because when there was a conflict between the state and the village, they chose to represent the interests of the village although sometimes they were not powerful enough to protect the interests of the villagers. Again, from villagers' comments, we can find that the villagers perceived their *guanxi* with the village cadres in terms of reciprocity that implies mutual *zeren* -- if the cadres fulfil their *zeren* as leaders, they would show their respect and loyalty in return. I must also say the villagers' standards of comment on their cadres were sometimes uneven. They situationally adopted their criteria to judge the cadres for their own purpose. This is quite obvious in the cases in next two chapters.

5.5. Discussion

As Robert P. Weller remarked, ordinary language or villagers' everyday discourses are not themselves political resistance or important in political resistance (1994). One of the most difficult things in fieldwork is how to make sense of their everyday life discourse and reorganize their fragmented voices. There are many interpretive possibilities in everyday action and ordinary language. The complaint of the villagers can be understood as only giving vent to their personal feelings or airing

their genuine grievances without any hidden meaning. But there is another possibility -- to construe these fragmented commentaries as peasants' critique of socialism and further interpret them as counter-discourse and cultural resistance against the official cultural domination. As Volosinov suggested, "in order to observe the phenomenon of language, both the producer and the receiver of sound and the sound itself must be placed into the social atmosphere" (1973:46). "Social atmosphere" to me is not only the speaking situation, but also the historical context. So the key to make sense of their discourses in resistance is to locate their everyday discourse in the historical process and relate it to other practices such as tax resistance, resisting birth control policy, emergence of ancestral committee and other different events in the village.

Since 1949, the socialist government has tried to make the Chinese believe in the superiority of the socialist system in comparison with capitalism. The legitimacy of the CCP was strengthened by the prospective economic and social benefits promised by the new socialist system, such as egalitarianism, food and shelter, medical care, education, job security, stable price, social stability, and elimination of social evils (e.g. corruption and drug addiction), all of which were lacking under the Nationalist regime (Liu, 1992; Zhong, 1996). As Yang Zhong remarked, "With the new communist system under the CCP emerged an informal "social contract" which became a main pillar of legitimacy for communist rule in the PRC" (Zhong, 1996:206). In the eyes of the Chinese, this informal "social contract" it was the main *zeren* of the communist government, to provide the socialist benefits or goodies and to eventually realize the communist paradise as promised in Chinese Marxism. Of course, the Public was expected to accept one-party rule and the loss of some liberties and political rights in return. The most significant strategy to guarantee this *guanxi* tie between the socialist state and the public was to shape people's thinking through controlling the mass media for the sake of making the Chinese accept the superiority of Chinese socialism.

However, the open door policy of Deng Xiao-ping self-weakened the ability of the socialist government in controlling information and its system of ideological control, especially in coastal provinces. The intervention of modern technology, the relaxed restrictions on rural-urban migration, and the free interaction between village and village, all provided a variety of information for the villagers. The exposure of

many different sorts of information and knowledge have dramatically awakened the cultural and political consciousness of the people who living in Chinese villages, at the same time preventing the domination of an authoritative interpretation and discourse in rural China. As they said "*youbijiao jiu zhidao*" (comparison makes the thing clear), one of the most common topics of conversation in Ku Village was about comparative types and costs of welfare, security, education, health and support for the elderly and others provided elsewhere and the role of other local and national governments in the funding and delivery of social security and services. As Ku villagers said "Ku Village is no longer a closed village, nobody can lie to us". By comparing with other foreign governments, they learned to think differently about their government and self-interest, and they found incoherences and contradictions in the official discourse on the superiority of socialism. There were also everyday comparisons with the "iron rice bowl" of urban residents and with other more prosperous rural regions of China. Not so very distant from Ku Village was the PRD where "good cadres" were known to have established prosperous enterprises "to make money, provide jobs and provide services". In comparison to such enterprising local cadres the Ku village leaders seemed "foolish, stupid and useless".

There were three aspects -- educational support, welfare for the elderly, and medical services -- the villagers felt the Chinese socialist government was failing to fulfill. When the villagers compared the eldercare service of Singapore with China, they felt the Chinese government failed to fulfill *zeren* to the elderly. When we were talking about Hongkong's nine years of free education, the Ku villagers became aware that the socialist government's "*ming bu fu shi*" (name does not match the reality). Referring to other country's health services, they questioned about the *zeren* of their government to the people. To the villagers, the CCP violated and invalidated the informal contract which was set up in the Maoist past. An unnatural phenomenon which occurred in the reform era was that *guanxi* was determined by money rather than by *zeren*. From the above dialogues, we can hear time and again the local lexicon of money, e.g. "no money, no talk" (*meiqian jiu buyao shuo*), "no money, no study" (*meiqian jiu buyao dushu*), and "money can make the ghost turn a millstone" (*youqian neng shi gui tuimo*). To the villagers, it is the government's *zeren* to provide equal opportunity of education to both the rich and the poor. Education as a

holy thing which should not be determined by any immoral factors such as "money", "*zou houmen*" (get in by the back door) and so on. Hospitals as public utilities also are to serve the people, not to make profit like private enterprises. They also think that it is the government's *zeren* to take care the elderly.

In short, in the mind of Ku villagers, a "good government" is the one that has *zeren* to provide the social service and security such as educational support, medical service, and welfare for the elderly and other services for their people. "Good cadres" are those who are just and honest in performing their official duty and stand for the interests of the poor. Good cadres also have some characteristic of entrepreneurs who know how to make money for their village. Maybe their models of "good government" and "good cadres" are not as complex as the philosophers thought. But they are collectively constructed by the villagers in comparison to other foreign governments, Maoist government, historical stories and other villages gleaned from mass media, hearsay, and direct observation, which have become their own schema to judge the performance of the government.

In the villagers' model of "good government" and "good cadres", the principle of reciprocity and mutual obligation is manifested again. That implies the villagers show their respect and obedience to their government and cadres, but rightfully expect protection and benevolence in return. The government and the cadres could lose their mandate and right to rule if they neglect their *zeren*. Surely these *zeren* are not fixed, but defined by the villagers through selectively and deceptively articulating different information for their own interests. I think that their construction of "good government" and "good cadres" were always purposeful. In the coming chapter, in villagers' resisting of tax policy and birth control policy, their models of "good government" and "good cadres" became very important because they played part of their arguments for legitimating their practices of resistance. Based on the villagers' framework, the state can only obtain their loyalty and support from the villagers by providing more benefits to them. Any party that failed to fulfill their *zeren* would turn down the exchange relationship. I will discuss in detail in the coming chapters how the models of "good government" and "good cadres" were employed by the villagers for justifying their resistance to the state policies.



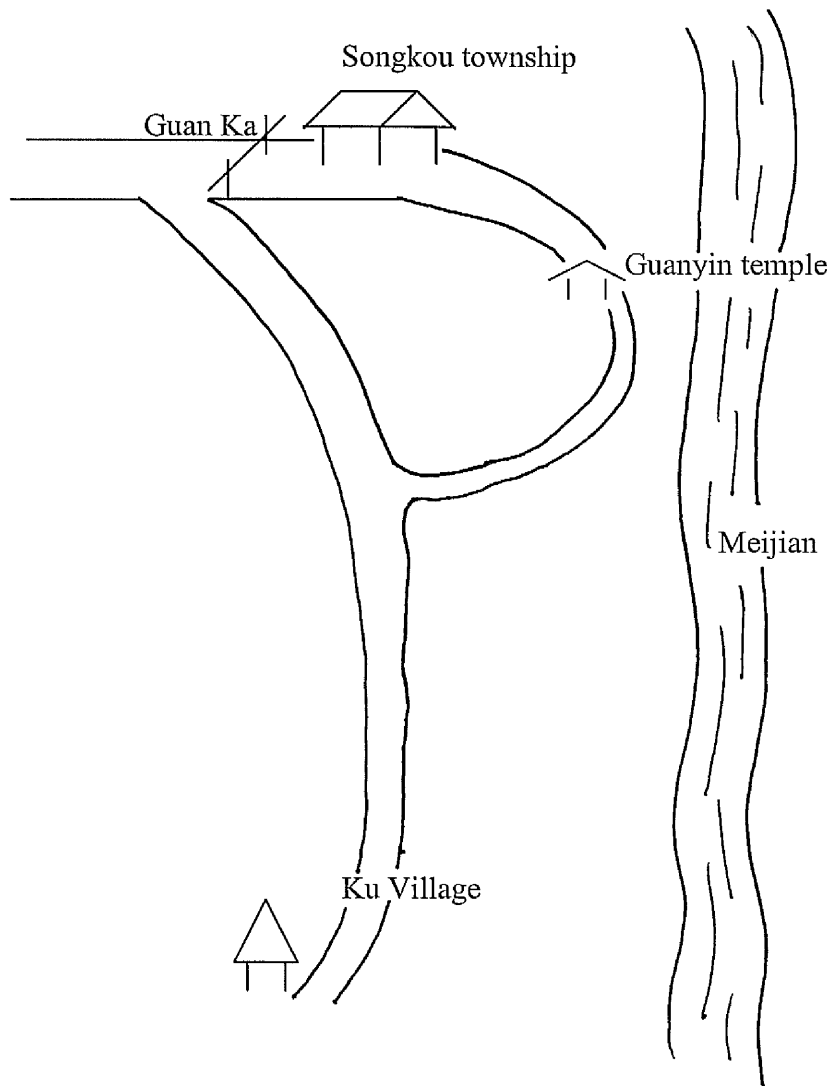
5.1. satellite TV



5.2. old people's house

Chapter 6: "Reasonable" and "Unreasonable" Levies - Ku Villagers' Resistance to Multifarious Imposition

One afternoon, I wanted to buy something from the shops at Songkou town. So I asked Brother Moi to drive me on his new Japanese motorbike. The motorbike was fast and we soon came to the cross between the highway and the village path. Suddenly Moi turned to the small path which was along the river (see Map 5).



Map 5. The Route from Ku Village to Songkou Township

"Moi, why turn to this way?" I asked because I had never gone to the township this way. He switched off the engine and we stopped in front of the Guanyin Temple. He said, "We have to stop here for a while." There was a small store beside the temple. Moi invited me to have a beer. We got in the store and sat in front of the table. The storeowner was a lady who seemed to know Moi well and she made fun of Moi. She teased, "What kind of wind blows you to my small and dirty store?" Moi smiled and said, "Don't talk so much. Please give me two bottles of Zhujiang beer." The lady opened the bottle for us and asked Moi, "Who's that handsome guy?" Moi said, "My brother." Then he turned to me and ignored the lady's other questions.

I still wanted to know why Moi had suddenly changed his route to the township and stopped here. So I persisted, "People seldom get to the township by this muddy small road. Why did you...?" Moi seemed to know what I was going to ask and interrupted me.

He said, "You know, Guangdong has been carrying out Yan da recently. At the highway, there is a check point (guanka) located at the strategic pass. Now, every motorbike and vehicles are being stopped at the checkpoint and the driver's license and vehicle registration are checked. Anyone failing to provide these documents will be fined. You know, I don't have a driver's license and my motorbike still hasn't been registered (ruhu). So villagers like me often turn to a small road as this because the police seldom set up the check points on these roads."

Yan da was the short form of "yanjun daji fanzui fenzi" which means seriously attack the criminals. In 1996, the Guangdong government carried out the movement of Yan da. Based on the official propaganda, it attempted to maintain public order. In this movement, migrant laborers without temporary residential certificates would be sent back to their original province; gambling and prostitution would be attacked; and illegal driving would be fined. In short, any "criminal activities", by the government's definition would be punished.

I said, "But don't you think it is right to get a driver's license and have the registration?"

Moi defended himself, "No, I don't think so. I have never understood why we have to get a driver's license. In our village, people learn to drive on their own. It is quite

simple. Why do we need to get a license to certify our knowledge of driving? I also don't understand the purpose of vehicle registration. This is my motorbike. It was bought with my own money. Why do I have to register it? This is just a way for the government to make money. The more fines they collect from us, the more money they can divide among themselves. "

I felt that I could not answer his questions. To keep on drinking was a way to cover up my embarrassment. At the moment, there was another motorbike passing the store. Moi ran out and shout, "Hi brother! Is there any check point at this moment?" The man on the motorbike shouted, "No! I think they are having their lunch now." The motorbike was moving away and raising a cloud of dust.

* * * *

Not only the urban citizens and university students, but also Chinese peasants' dissatisfaction with the socialist government had received the highest level in the 1990s. Although there was not a remarkable demonstration like the Tiananmen event in 1989 in rural China, it was reported by the scholars and journalist that violent clashes and rural unrest had grown in recent years (e.g. Li and Obrien, 1996; Liu, 1992; Tang and Wang, 1989; Zong, 1997; Oriental Daily, December 5, 1997 & November 1, 1997; Ming Daily, October 11, 1997). The demonstrations and petitions of the peasants were to protest the exorbitant taxes and levies, the compulsory apportionment, the mistreatment of local cadres, and the violence of local forces. The central government had been aware that the conflict between the peasants and local authority was threatening its legitimacy. On October 15th 1990, the central government made a policy decision -- "*Jianjue zhizi luan shoufei luan fankuan he gezhong tanpai*" (Insistently stop the unreasonable fee collection, fine and multifarious apportioned charge) -- in order to stop the phenomena of "*san luan*" (unreasonable fee collection, exorbitant fine, and multifarious apportionment) for reconciling the dispute between the peasants and the government. Although the central government repeatedly stressed on lightening the burden on peasants, in fact, the burden of the peasants became heavier still, and the clashes and violence become more serious. On May 6th 1996, the central government made another "*Tongzhi*"

(announcement) concerning the reduction of the peasants' burden (Meizhou Daily, July 5, 1996).¹ In the "announcement", the central government repeatedly declared:

Every region and every department must constantly implement the "yue fa san zhang" (agreement on a three-point laws of reducing the peasant burden): Firstly, insistently stopping the unreasonable items of peasant burden, stopping the public collection of fund and apportionment; secondly, holding on to all the new items of collection, prohibiting any activities which required the contribution of peasant's labour and money; thirdly, local government and departments had no right to reopen items stopped by the State Council.... totally prohibiting the misuse of the police and local security forces, not allowing to arrest, tie, jail the people and confiscate the property of peasants illegally... (Renmin Rebao, June 5, 1996. My own translation).

However, the peasants and the local cadres often stated "*shangao huangdi yuan*" (the mountain is high and the emperor is far away). The central government seemed to be powerless in checking the decision of local government and the behavior of its policy implementers. Staying in Ku Village, the villagers' voices of discontent with taxation, multifarious imposition and mistreatment of local cadres have never stopped. They not only voice out their discontent, but also transform their voices into active resistance by *kangshui* (refusing to pay taxes), *taoshui* (taxes evasion), and *jujiao kuanxiang* (rejecting any imposed fees). *Kangshui* refers to the action when the villagers directly and openly refuse to pay taxes in front of the tax collector or local cadres. In contrast, *taoshui* is often carried out "offstage" in Scott's term (1985). That means, the villagers carry out tax resistance silently instead of openly for the purpose of avoiding notice and detection. *Jujiao kuanxiang* generally refers to the act that the villagers resist paying a variety of multifarious fees.

For the *taoshui zhe* (people who evade taxes) and *kangshui zhe* (people who reject to pay taxes) and people involved into different resistance, their actions are often for the sake of vital material gains or avoiding material loss. However, these actions are not intended subversion to the government and the whole system of taxation. So, their tactics of resistance are relatively safe even when carried out

¹. The document called "*nongyebu, jianchabu, caizhengbu, guojia jiwei, guowuyuan fazhiju guanyu dangdian jianqing nongmin fudang de qingkuang he jinghou gongzuo de yijian*" (The opinions of the Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Supervision, Ministry of Finance, State Planning Commission, and Ministry of Justice, concerning the task of reducing the burdens of peasants at the current and future stages.)

openly. To avoid calling attention to themselves in Ku Village, there are no formal organizations among the villagers in their resistance. But the villagers practice their resistance with a fairly high level of tacit cooperation which relies on a common framework of argument constructed by themselves in everyday discourse.

I agree with Ross (1989:63) that since the introduction of the household responsibility system, more and more villagers appear to perceive their relationship with the state in contractual terms. After the Division of Land at the beginning of 1980s, farmers in China commonly "entered into contracts with their governments that obliged them to sell grain to the state, but also obliged the local government to supply production materials" such as land (Li and O'Brien, 1996:63). When they thought the government did not provide any assistance -- e.g. technical and resource -- for their production, they would think that which claims on their products were unreasonable or intolerable; and when the government imposed new taxes on them without giving any returned benefit like social services, they would also treat it as unreasonable and such actions were attributed to the "greed" of government.

From the everyday conversation and discourse of the villagers, the villagers had constructed a framework of argument that divided taxes into *buheli de shui* (unreasonable tax) and *heli de shui* (reasonable tax) for mitigating or denying claims made on them by the government. The villagers defined unreasonable and reasonable tax in terms of their conceptions of social justice, rights and obligation, social contract, and reciprocity. As I presented in Chapter one and two, villager's conception of mutual *zeren* is defined in term of *guanxi*. Anyone involved in these interpersonal ties are required to perform the specific prescribed actions for maintaining the link, and which are based on norms of reciprocity and are defined as personal obligations on the part of each individual. The villagers extended this norm of reciprocity and mutual *zeren* to the *guanxi* between the state and the masses (*laobai xing*). Both have to fulfill their pre-defined responsibility. The Chinese proverb "*guanbi minfan*" tells us that misgovernment drives the people to revolt. Misgovernment refers to the one which fails to perform its responsibility. In Confucian philosophy, an ideal government has to implement policy of benevolence (*ren zheng*) with kindheartedness. It is the government's obligation to help its people well-fed and well-clothed (*fengyi zushi*), as well as to assure subsistence of the

masses. In contrast, a bad government is the one which oppresses and exploits the masses without considering their survival. Of course, as the mutual responsibility and the relationship is socially defined and constructed, although it preexists, the people still can redefine their relationship with others in the specific situation. In defining the conception of social contract, the villagers' framework of unreasonable and reasonable tax is also bound by their conception of "*wo de*" (mine) and "*ni de*" (yours). In daily language, they clearly divide "my money" and "your money". "My money" refers to money that is earned via my own work by using my own labour, resources, and any other input of production. If there is no form of benefit in return, they would say "*women koudai li de qian, ni bie xiang na de dao*" (don't you dream of taking the money in our pockets).

This chapter is used to illustrate how the villagers struggle to re-define their relationship with the government and use their cultural framework for validating their resistance to taxation and multifarious fee collection. In this chapter, there are four questions that I will try to answer: 1) How do the villagers perceive "tax" and "fee"? 2) What is the difference between the officials' and the villagers' conception of "tax" and "fee" conveyed through everyday conversation? 3) How do the villagers' conception of "money" and "state responsibility" influence their conception of taxation and different kinds of fees? 4) What tactics do the villagers employ in resisting the tax policy and imposed fees? In the following sections, I will closely study the villagers' resistance to land tax, pomelo tax, slaughtering tax, and other unreasonable imposition. To understand these taxes resistance, I think we cannot decontextualize the issue to understand "that" or know "how", but gather knowledge "from within" a situation or circumstance in Ku Village's context.

6.1. Official Discourse on Taxation

Taxation reform was an important part of China's economic reform in the 1990s. On April 1st of 1994, the new tax system was formally publicized and carried out by the State Council. In the new system, tax was divided into three levels -- central revenue (*zhongyang shui shou*), shared revenue between the central and the local government (*zhongyang difang gong xiang shuishou*), and local revenue (*difang*

shuishou). The government stressed that the aim of new tax system was to increase and guarantee the tax revenue of the state; meanwhile, it offered financial autonomy to the local government (Meizhou Daily, April 24, 1996). But viewing it in a different light, taxation itself was an undisguised and "justified" way for the state to squeeze income from the masses. While its practice can be totally formulated within the framework of morality; it can also be defined into the *guanxi* between the state and its people in terms of "citizenship", which is linked with the language of right and laws.

April of 1996 was a national propaganda month of taxation (*xuanchuan yue*). In Meixian, during this month, the county government widely publicized of the knowledge on taxation through the mass media. In big streets and small lanes, slogans like the following were written on hung banners and wall posters to teach the masses:

"*Ni jingying wo zhichi, ni zhuanqian wo shoushui*" (You do the business, I support; you make the money, I collect the tax)

"*Aiguo aishui, shuli dishui xin xingxiang*" (Love the country, love the tax; establish the new image of local tax)

"*Shouru zhongdan dajia tiao, renren jianshang you zhibiao*" (Everyone has to share the heavy burden of state revenue, everyone's shoulders have to bear the quota)

"*Reai dishui, zuo kua shiji rencai*" (Loving the local tax, become the talent to cross the century)

"*Shuishou, renmin de shuishou, guojia de shuishou*" (Tax revenue, people's tax revenue, state's tax revenue)

"*Shoufa jingying, zhaodang nashui*" (Doing the business in accordance to law, paying the tax based on regulation)

Official newspapers were also one of the important ways in which we can see how the socialist state formed its discourse on taxation. Taxation was defined by law as the duty and obligation (*yiwu he zeren*) of the citizen (*gongmin*). The vice-mayor of Meizhou stated in a newspaper on June 6, 1996, "Based on the law, the PRC citizens have the duty of paying tax on time and reporting revenue accurately. Anyone who fails to fulfill these duties is violating the law and will bear the legal responsibility." Those who violated the law were labeled as "*bufa fengzi*" (illegal elements) and were criticized as having a "low consciousness of citizenship in

taxation" (*gongmin yishi di*). Anyone refusing or evading tax was threatened to be punished and put into jail. Accompanying the "rejectable others", the government established the "good models" of those who actively and willingly paid tax on time. The *guangrong nashuihu* (glorious tax-paying households) and *xianjing nashuiyuan* (advanced tax collectors) were praised and honored in glorifying meetings held by the county government. The masses were called to learn from these good models for the sake of "the construction of a socialist market economy."

In governmental discourse, the idea of taxation in the language of modernity is also linked to economic development and market reform. As the head of the Local Tax Bureau of Meizhou said, "We have to point out the relationship between taxation and a market economy. In the process of development of the socialist market economy, tax collection system is an important mechanism of macro adjustment (*hongguang tiaozhen*), and becoming more and more important." The head of the National Tax Bureau of Meizhou made the similar address entitled "*Da shuishou, Da gaige, Da fazhan*" (Great Tax Collection, Great Reform, Great Development), in which he stressed the importance of the tax system to the development of a socialist market economy. To achieve the goal of economic reform, it was necessary to carry out three "ations" -- liberation and transformation of the old mind, scientification and modernization of administrative methods, and the standardization of the law and regulation of tax.

For legitimating tax collection, the government also defined tax in terms of reciprocity. It said that "without accurate state policy, without becoming rich", that meant the increase of income and the improvement of living standard was owed to the CCP's "*fumin zhengce*" (policy to let people make money). Paying the tax was an act of repayment of gratitude to the state. It was a citizen's *zeren* in the *guanxi* with the state. Thus "you making the money, I collecting the tax" (*ni zhuanqian wo shoushui*) become very reasonable in the state's view.

6.2. Kang Shui I: The Dispute on Land Tax

In Chinese villages, after dividing the land to individual household in 1981, the basic responsibility of each peasant household was to meet the compulsory rice

purchase quotas or grain tax (villagers called it *gongliang*, government named it *nongye shui*) based on the area of contracted land. At the beginning of rural reform, the Chinese government strongly emphasized "household contracting which meant that peasants contracted land from the collective for a limited period of time, and the land continued to belong to the collective"(Bernstein, 1992). The policy makers emphasized that, household contracting was a change in management, not a change in ownership (Li, L. T. 1992).

Apart from the compulsory grain quotas, peasants also had to fulfill some other responsibilities. In the villagers' receipt of tax, I found there were three other kinds of tax. This included education grain (*jiaoyu liang*), favoured treatment grain (*youdai liang*) which was used to subsidize those families having members in the army, and five guarantees grain (*wubao liang*) which meant that the childless elderly who was guaranteed food, clothing, medical care, housing and burial expenses by the government. Basically, the introduction of taxes was a new practice that was based on expectations of a reciprocal relationship between the government and villagers. In Ku Village, the villagers were witting and willing to fulfill their task of *gongliang* and the other three kinds of grains because the government had honoured its obligations by providing land to them, and then was entitled to receive return payments in cash or kind. Putting it into their framework, *gongliang* was a reasonable tax and they had the duty to pay it in return. Uncle Bi interpreted the *gongliang* as follows:

It is reasonable to pay *gongliang*. Just like renting land from a landlord. You have to pay rent at the end of the year. If we don't give tax grain to the state, where does the state get its income from?

Uncle Si also expressed his view on *gongliang* similarly:

Gongliang is something that we ought to hand in since we made an agreement of delivering *gongliang* to the state when we contracted the land from *shengchandu* (production team). If you don't want to deliver *gongliang*, you can choose not to contract the land from the state. It is fair enough (*gongping*).

In the interview with the village cadres, they also witnessed that almost all the villagers in Ku Village paid the compulsory rice quotas on time.

However, the newly instituted tax in 1985 was perceived by the villagers as something extra or unreasonable which aroused dissatisfaction from the villagers.

The argument of "*heli de shui*" and "*buheli de shui*" was obviously manifested in the 1985 dispute on new land tax. According to the villagers, before the mid-1980s, the contracted land (wet rice fields) was not allowed to change its usage in order to maintain grain output. Also not allowed was the transfer of contracted land to other households privately for blocking the full privatization of land. After the mid-1980s, there was some modification of the land policy in Guangdong where villagers were given the right to change the use of land as well as allowed to transfer the right of land to other households which have abundant labour. This was allowed with some compensation and the permission of the villagers' committee. The villagers were given an extension of the contract for a period up to fifty years, which permitted the inheritance of the land and the sale of a land contract. The goal of this policy was to promote the enthusiasm and flexibility of agricultural production. However, in some cadres' words, the unintended consequence was that the change of policy after 1984 made some of the villagers think that the land had been de facto theirs (*ziji de*) or had become private property (*siyou caichan*). So in Ku Village, the villagers freely transferred their land to other households without the permission of the government. They also transferred the use of the land as they saw fit.

The practice of privatization of land in villages like Ku Village alarmed the government. In the official newspapers and publications, the government often commented that the idea of the private (*si*) was eroding the property of the public (*gong*) (Li, L. T. 1992). In 1985, the campaign for the "construction of socialist spiritual civilization" (*shehuizhuyi wenming jianshe*) was launched by the Chinese government in order to preserve certain socialist values and practices that were to enhance the consciousness of "state" or "public". Collecting a fee for contracted land was one of the ways the Communist government adopted to strengthen the villagers' awareness of the state's ownership of land. In the official interpretation, arable land theoretically remained under the ownership of the collective and could only be parceled out as usage rights to villagers.

After the policy had been transmitted to the local level, the township government decided to collect five dollars from each household. But implementing policies was not a simple task because there was no "one-way street from Beijing to the villages" (Bernstein, 1992:144). There was much variation in the capacity of the

party-state to implement its goals in the villages depending on the role played by local cadres, geographical remoteness and so on. This policy was confronted with resistance from the villagers in Ku Village. Brother Wong recalled what happened when the policy was passed to the village.

When the villagers read the announcement of collecting land fees from the red paper posted by the village cadre, everybody was talking about the matter. Some old villagers began to worry and fear about the durability of household contracting. My mother came to tell me, "Ah Wong, the Communist Party's policy always changes. You'd better ask your older brother to find you a job in the city. We cannot trust the Gongchandang (Chinese Communist Party). Today they talk about collecting the land fee, and tomorrow they may decide to recollect all the land." I think my mother's anxieties were rooted in fresh memories of the policy fluctuation in the Maoist and early Deng's periods. But I comforted my Mother, "Mum, don't worry too much. It is impossible for the government to abrogate the reform and return to the collective." Although I comforted my mother like that, I myself was actually a bit worried too. As you know, the Communist Party changes their policy all this time. Who can tell what will happen next? In our village, such worries prevailed at the time. It was unbelievable that there were so many old villagers, my mother included, worrying about retreat from reform. Some said they would stop spreading manure and apply fertilizer on the contracted land; others said they would cut their fruit trees on the contracted land; some said they would enjoy themselves before the policy changed... But I know that they just talked. Chinese villagers are very careful. They were always going to wait and see.

As you know, we liked chatting together after lunch and dinner at someone's house. Now I forget who began to question the rationale of this policy. The villagers suspected that was not the policy of central government, but the tuzhengce (local policy) of local government. The villagers said with certainty that only the local government would do this kind of unreasonable thing. The villagers also argued that they had fulfilled their responsibility of gongliang in respect to contracted land, so it was unreasonable for the local government to collect the land fee. They called the land fee "shuangchong shui" (double taxes).

The Day after, our discussion on this matter became a rumour which swept through the village. The villagers believed that the policy was made by the local government and it was unreasonable to collect the land fee after they had paid the gongliang. When the village cadres came to collect the land fee, the villagers refused to pay by adopting the reasons of local policy (tuzhengce) and double taxes. Some villagers asked the cadres to show the document of the policy; some also questioned why the state did not collect the land contract fee at the beginning of "division of land" if the tax was reasonable. The village cadres were very angry and cursed the savagery of the villagers. But they really could not show us the document of the policy. In the end they couldn't collect even a penny from the villagers.

The dispute of new land tax manifested the different interpretation of "tax" between the state and villagers. From the viewpoint of officials, land tax and *gongliang* are two different things. *Gongliang* is the absolute and unconditional obligation that villagers have to fulfill, but the villagers pay the land tax because they rent the land from the state. In a socialist state, there is no private ownership of land, but only public ownership of land. But to the villagers, the "division of land" implies that they de facto have the ownership of land. This conception became manifested in the villagers' transmission of land to other households without the permission of the villagers' committee.

Wong's recollection of events also told me how they perceived the new land taxes and how they constructed the discourse of taxation in everyday conversation. The story manifested a reflection of villagers' expectations of a reciprocal relationship between the government and villagers. The villagers did not regard the grain tax to be an unconditional obligation. They thought they had fulfilled their *zeren* through *gongliang*. Thus any additional imposition without any new return would be seen as "unreasonable", or as something "extra" that could not be tolerated. The Ku villagers also imagined and created their own story that the new land tax was not the policy of the central government but a violation of policy and law by the local government. A villager, Wen-da, questioned whether the levy was authorized by high levels.

The Central Government often advocates the reduction of economic burdens on the peasants. It's impossible for the Central Government to create such additional fees. We have the right not to pay the fee if the

local government has broken the central directive. How can they ask me to honour it?

The local government and local cadres were made out as enemies of the villagers, as well as scapegoats of the new tax policy, even it was a state policy. In the Chinese countryside, there is a popular saying that "The center is our benefactor (*enren*), the province is our relative, the county is a good person, the township is an evil person, and the village is our enemy". The central government was seen to be a loving being who would not carry out such an unreasonable tax. I think the villagers subtly created the story like that not only for the sake of validating their resistance, but also to play it safe. In the village, everyone could be the story creator or the rumour maker, but no one person had to take the responsibility.

Regarding this event, I interviewed the village party Secretary Songsheng. When I mentioned the land fee collection in the mid-1980s, I stirred up her emotions. She poured out her grievances and hoped I could understand the difficulty of the village cadres.

It is a tough job to be a village cadre. It is not easy for us to implement policy. We cannot use coercion to collect fees. Acting as the middlemen between the state and the villagers, we face pressure from two sides. The villagers are very savage and merciless. They say the policy is our policy. How can it be our policy! We explained again and again that it was the state policy. They didn't believe it. They asked us to show documentation. But all policy documents are confidential. How could we show them? They also said they had delivered their *gongliang* and it was unreasonable to pay *shuangchong shui*. But as you know, *gongliang* is the *zeren* of villagers. They pay the land tax because they rent the land from the state. Those are two different things.

She further interpreted the concept of "*gong*" (public) and "*si*" (private). She said:

Dividing the land among households does not imply the privatization of land. Most people misunderstand the concept of "public" (*gong*) and "private" (*si*). Although the land is distributed to individual households, they only have usage rights, but the state still maintains the ownership of the land.

However, the protracted struggle of the villagers made the village cadres look for an eclectic solution on this issue. The final consented decision of the cadres was to pay the land contract fee on behalf of all the villagers from their small collective revenue

which was obtained mainly from the renting out of public fish ponds, fruit trees, and so on. The practice was to ask the representatives of individual households to sign their names on the name list for proving that they had paid the fee.

At the beginning of rural reform, the villagers had received dividends from the villagers' committee. But after Uncle Leng became the head of village, the village committee no longer divided the dividends. They always suspected that the village head embezzled the collective fund. In this event, the villagers supported the Administrative District Committee's (ADC) decision to pay the new land tax with the collective fund rather than lose all their dividends. In the end, the villagers paid the fee in name, but the villagers' committee paid it in reality.

The change of rice purchasing regulations also strengthened the Ku villagers' conception of the private ownership of land. Before 1992, the Guangdong villagers had to meet the compulsory rice purchasing quotas in kind and the villagers had to pay 30 jin grain each mu. But in 1992, a new rule allowed the peasants to pay their rice delivery quotas to the state in cash. The monetization of taxation released villagers from the rice production and allowed them to shift to more profitable commercial agriculture. In the village, most of the households changed the use of their contracted land to grow pomelo and other fruit because the price of fruit was much higher than rice. The freedom of land manipulation further intensified the villagers' idea of private ownership of the land as I often heard the villagers say "The land is ours, we can grow anything we like."

6.3. Kang Shui II: Villagers' Resistance on Pomelo Tax

Pomelo tax has become an interface of struggle between the state and the villagers since 1992. Until today, the story still has no ending.

Late October of 1992 was the busy season for the villagers because they traded their pomelo with pomelo buyers from town. The village cadres were also busy because they planned to collect a tax on pomelo. According to the village cadres, the order was coming from the provincial government. The provincial government planned to collect tax on pomelo as they thought the villagers had benefited from the pomelo harvest. Uncle Chang and his wife recalled the collecting process,

*One afternoon, Songsheng and other cadres of the ADC came to our village and visited us household by household. They visited our home when we were trading pomelo with the buyer. After the cash was passed from the buyer to our hands, Songsheng came out to collect the pomelo tax. She explained that it's the policy of the upper government. She persuaded us to pay the tax by using many "sweet words" (*huayan qiaoyu*). She acted like a beggar and asked us to cooperate with her. We assumed it was really the state policy, and therefore paid about one thousand yuan to her. But afterward, we found many villagers had refused to pay the tax. We thought that we had been cheated by Songsheng.*

According to the villagers, there were different forms of reaction to the pomelo tax collection at the time -- some were timid and overcautious (*danxiao pashi*), and paid the tax immediately though unwillingly; some simply refused to pay; some haggled about the amount of tax with the village cadres; others said they would only pay after they had verified that it was really state policy; some agreed to pay the tax only after all the other villagers had paid; and some threatened to cut all the pomelo trees if the government insisted on taxing on pomelo. Owing to a large proportion of villagers who refused to pay the taxes, the cadres reported the difficulty to the upper government and the tax collection was stopped. In this event, a purely economic account of this resistance is inadequate. Although there were varieties of practice, basically they had a unity of purpose and common reason in mitigating or denying the claim of tax made on them -- the pomelo tax had violated their principle of mutual obligation. Therefore, the villagers thought that collecting pomelo tax was unreasonable and unjust. They often argued that the government did not provide any aid, including financial and technical support for them in the plantation of Shatian pomelo; in addition, the basic resource-- land -- was not provided by the government, but reclaimed on their own. Thus, it was unreasonable for them to pay the new tax.

In 1986, Mei county was designated by the government as the country's major commercial pomelo-producing base. Then the policy of "opening out the wasteland and planting fruit trees" (*kaihuang zhongguo*) was formally put in place. At first, the villagers and grassroots cadres were unwilling to plant the Shatian pomelo because they had never planted it in mass production. Besides, there was a lack of cultivated

land in villages.² No one wanted to take the risk of planting pomelo. As I stated in chapter four, the government used persuasion and compulsory means to impose this policy on the villagers. Villagers who planted one sapling would be subsidized four or five jiao. The village cadres had to play the leading role and took the lead to plant the Shatian pomelo. Each production team also had to fulfill the quota of planting. To encourage the villagers to plant the pomelo, the government launched a policy which indicated "whoever reclaims the wasteland, owns the land". Since the government did not set up the tax policy in this plantation programme at the beginning, villagers thought it was unreasonable to extract the tax from them after they began to benefit from the pomelo plantation. They also accredited the taxation to the "greed" of the government. The Ku villagers made a joke about the socialist government, "*Gongchandang* is poor, so our money always attracts their attention (*jianqian yankai*)."² Furthermore, the villagers refused to pay the tax because to them, the money earned from pomelo was "my money", not "your money". It was earned via their own land, their own labour, and a whole year of hard work, without any assistance from the government. Any policy intended to extract "my money" was intolerable and unreasonable within their framework. The villagers often said "Money is in our pockets, nobody can get it", "The money is earned by our hard work. They don't want to get it without a thank."

Although the government failed to collect the pomelo tax in 1992, it did not mean it totally gave up the tax policy of Shatian pomelo. For further tax collection, the government ordered the local administrative organization to investigate (*mo di*) and provide statistics about the area and number of pomelo trees in villages. It was a hard task for the village cadres because they understood the difficulty and the dissatisfaction of the villagers during the last tax collection. But in this data collection, the village cadres failed to fulfill the task once again because the villagers adopted feigned ignorance as the tactic to resist the investigation. When I was staying in Ku Village in 1993, the investigation was in process. As I witnessed, when Secretary Songsheng went to inquire at the peasants' household regarding the number of pomelo trees, the villagers did not often cooperate with her. Some refused to report

². In Ku Village, each villager can only obtain 0.8 mu (1 mu = 1/6 acre) of land from a production team.

the number, and some under-reported or mis-reported the number of trees. The defensive ones even verbally abused Songsheng when she tried to ask about the number of pomelo trees. They were well aware of the aim of the statistics. More importantly, the villagers suspected that it was not the state policy but the wicked idea (*gui zhuyi*) of local cadres. After Songsheng failed to fulfill the task, she under-reported and mis-reported the number of pomelo trees of the villagers on the reporting forms (*baobiao*). She also asked the accountant, Yueshun, to complete the job for her. I heard of Songsheng's under-reporting through Yueshun. He was dissatisfied with Songsheng, feeling that she shirked responsibility to him considering the deadline of the data collection was drawing near. He showed me the reporting forms and grumbled about the villagers' uncooperative nature and Songsheng's irresponsibility.

One evening, I visited Yueshun's home. His wife told me that he seemed to be unhappy. When he saw me, he was warmly making tea for me. Chatting for awhile, he began to speak his unhappiness (tu ku shui). Yueshun said, "Now the villagers lack the concept of 'public'. They will do anything for self-interest. It is due to the mentality of petty peasants' economy and it is impossible to ask them to contribute a proportion to the 'public'...."

Yueshun's mother suddenly interrupted him, "You must understand the villagers' situation. They are poor. They have no money to pay the tax." "No money? They have TVs, radio sets, motorbikes... The average income of our village is above 1000 yuan. Today's individual peasants are rich, but the collective are poor!" Yueshun angrily said.

Then he ignored the old woman and continued to talk to me about his dissatisfaction, "I don't know how to report the data. All the data we have collected is false. It is impossible to report data like that...How low is her standard of education? I will not bear the responsibility. I will not change her handwriting!" He said as he continued to grumble.

Looking at the data in the reporting forms, I found the data was really far from reality. As I knew, the households had at least 30 more pomelo trees each.

Some even had more than 100 pomelo trees. But on the form, each household only reported five to twenty trees.

In 1995, the Chinese government formally implemented the policy of “collecting a special local agricultural product tax”. One day I found a large fresh red piece of paper posted out by the ADC. Looking closely, I realized that it was a statement of state policy copied by the ADC. It read as follows:

The Propaganda for Special Local Agricultural Product Tax

1) What is a Special Local Agricultural Product Tax?

A special local agricultural product tax is also called an agricultural tax to be charged on special local agricultural products. It is one kind of agricultural tax. It is a tax levied by the state on the unit/individuals who obtained income from special local agricultural products or the unit/individual who collects these products.

2) Which kinds of agricultural products have to be taxed?

The following seven kinds of agricultural products set by the provincial government: 1. tobacco; 2. garden farming; 3. aquatic; 4. forest; 5. livestock; 6. edible mushroom; 7. and valuable food.

3) How to calculate the tax?

According to the tax policy of the state and considering the present situation of our region, on the 17th of October, the cadres of the administrative region committee and leaders of the villages have decided to collect two fen for each jin of Shatian pomelo. The village cadres will register the total amount of production of each household and then collect the tax. Thank you for your cooperation and understanding.

Xiaohuang Administrative District Committee,

18th October 1995

An official in county government told me that, according to rigidly state policy, the tax rate of special local agricultural product was set at 13.2%. But the county government thought that that tax rate was too high for the peasant. They were worried that this policy would destroy the enthusiasm of the peasants. They knew that the peasants would withdraw from pomelo planting if the tax was too high. So they just set up the quota for the township government and then the township government set up the quota for the different villages based on the estimated area of pomelo production. Based on the quota, the villagers' committee of Ku Village had to fulfill the quota and pay about 2,000 *yuan* in total. Based on the estimated amount of production, the villagers had to pay two *fen* per *jin*. Although the tax rate was light, the villagers were still very discontent with the pomelo tax because the tax violated their principles of what they deemed just. They once again argued that the government had not provided them with any assistance. Some also stated that the pomelo tax was a duplicate tax because some of them used the contracted land to plant the pomelo. They thought that their fulfillment of *gongliang* implied they have fulfilled all the tax obligations from contracted land. So they thought it was unreasonable to be asked them to pay the duplicate tax. Uncle Qiang explained why he thought the tax was duplicate:

The tax itself is unreasonable. Taking I myself as an example, I did not reclaim much wasteland. I planted most of my pomelo tree on the contracted land. You know, I have paid the *gongliang* for the contracted land. Of course I refused to pay the tax for my pomelo which is planted on the contracted land.

There were varieties of responses from the villagers to the pomelo tax. Some villagers told me that they would wait and see if other villagers would pay; some suggested that the villagers' committee could use the collective fund to pay the tax; some refused to pay the tax without any further consideration.

Although the administrative region committee had posted the statement of state policy, the village cadres still had to convoke a villagers' meeting in order to hear the opinions of villagers. When I was staying in the village, Secretary Songsheng failed to convoke a meeting every time. Nobody assembled meeting because the villagers clearly knew that the cadres would announce the policy of

pomelo tax. Once again, feigned ignorance was adopted by the villagers in order to resist the tax policy. All of them were absent and claimed that they were "busy". Songsheng was very angry and complained that the villagers "had no discipline and were belligerent" (*wu ji lü*) and were "savage" (*ye mang*).

We find it very difficult to carry out our task. They are very savage!
They have no concept of "public" (*gong*)! Two fen per jin has been
very low, and it is unreasonable to refuse to pay.

There was also a dissension among the cadres about the ways to approach getting the money for this tax payment. Some cadres, who were afraid of much trouble, agreed to using the collective fund to pay the tax. In fact, Songsheng was one who strongly recommended this method. She told the village leader:

... this is a good idea to pay the tax with collective fund. The quota of your village is not so high, and I think your village is financially strong enough to pay this money. This method not only reduces your work load, but also rewards to the villager who plants more pomelo trees and punishes the lazy ones who are not working hard enough (*jiangqin falan*).

However, some village cadres, such as Yueshun, did not agree with this idea. To him, it was unreasonable to pay the tax by using the public fund again. He firmly stated:

No! Who say the tax can be paid with the collective fund? The policy clearly states that the tax is levied from the individuals who obtain income from pomelo. The collective fund is not an individual's money, it is for public affairs. Peasants are always so stubborn and selfish. They always want to divide the property of the collective. You know this method is also unfair because the production of individual household is different. How can we ask them to pay the same rate?

Although the government also intended to collect the tax from the buyers of Shatian pomelo, according to the villagers and the buyers, this policy was not implemented. To the villagers, collecting the tax from the buyers made no difference because the pomelo buyers would lower the purchasing price and transfer the cost to them. They also did not expect the government to really collect the tax from the buyers. Meeting some buyers in Ku Village, they confirmed that they did not pay the tax to any governmental department.

The villagers also rejected to pay the tax because the purchasing price of Shatian pomelo was fluctuating and even decreasing in these three years.³ In 1994, the average purchasing price was around 1.8 yuan per jin. However, in 1995, the price decreased to 1.5 yuan per jin and even lower. Most of the peasant households kept the pomelo in their storeroom and waited for the higher purchasing price. They told me that they felt very uncertain because the "the money was still not in their pocket".⁴ Indeed the new tax policy of pomelo deepened their sense of insecurity which made them insistent on rejecting the extraction from the government.

6.4. Tao Shui: Villagers' Discontent with the Tax of Slaughtering

Raising pigs is the main sideline activity in Ku Village. I remember the first time I entered the Ku Village, almost all households in the house I had lived had two or three heads of pig. They told me that raising pigs was not only for earning money, but for farmyard manure which was provided by the pigs. However, during these past several years, there have been less and less households raising pigs. According to a small survey conducted by myself, there were only nine households raising pigs in Ku Village. Uncle Chang's wife gave me some of the reasons:

The tax is so high. It isn't worth raising pigs. Slaughtering tax, market tax, service charge, and so on, there are so many different kinds of taxes that I cannot remember!

Another village woman, Aunt Xiang said:

Today raising pigs makes no money. For each head of pig we have to pay 65 yuan tax. Including the cost of pig feed, we raise pigs for nothing and go through a lot of hardship in the process.

However, not all the villagers stopped raising pigs. Some households even raised more than before. Brother Xin was an exceptional case. He raised six heads of pigs.

³. After the pomelo plantation became the dominant economic activity in Ku Village, the income of the villagers mainly depended on pomelo trading. Any policy which influenced their income would be hated by the villagers.

⁴. The villager explained that there were several reasons for the decrease in the purchasing price. First, under the state policy of "macro adjustment", the pomelo buyers could not obtain the loan from the banks. Secondly, most of the buyers lost money in the pomelo business last year, so they adjusted the purchasing price this year. Third, there was an increase in pomelo production and the demand of pomelo could not be increased by the same rate, so the purchasing price decreased.

I was so puzzled, if it was a losing business, why did the villagers still raised pigs. When I asked Brother Xin for reasons, he just smiled and told me that he had his own solution. It was mid-night, and I finally discovered what his solution was.

I remembered when I almost fell asleep, I was suddenly awakened by the cry of pigs. It was noisy outside my window, and looking at the clock, it was 2 a.m. I was curious as to what had happened outside. I heard someone say, "Hurry up! Hurry up! Put the pig head into the bamboo basket." It sounded like Brother Xin's voice. I heard another one say, "Don't wake up the neighbours. Go quickly!" I thought it was Uncle Leng, Xin's father. "Good! Let's go. My bother is waiting for your pigs," someone said. I heard the sounds of motorbike engines, and then the voices were gradually lost along with the fading motorbike sounds.

The next day I asked Bother Xin what had happened last night. He knew it was impossible to hide the fact from me: "You are ziji ren (one of us). I will tell you the truth. I sell my pigs to the private butcher in a neighbouring village, so I needn't pay the slaughtering tax. We have no other way. If I paid the tax, I make no money." I thought I was no position to express my feelings on this issue, so I said nothing. Xin saw I had no response, so he continued to say: "I think it is unreasonable to tax our pigs. The government doesn't do anything for us other than impose different taxes on us. The peasants work very hard to earn money. Of course we don't want anyone to get our 'blood and sweat' money (xuehan qian) without thanks." I showed my consent as he expected and asked him how the butcher was able to sell his pork on the free market. His eyes seemed to tell me what a silly question I had asked. He said: "Today in China, money can make the ghost turn a millstone (youqian neng shi gui tuimo). If they can pay some money to the staff at the Industrial and Commercial Bureau (Gong Shan Ju), they can freely sell tax-free pork in the free market. It is not difficult." ⁵

Confronted with the unreasonably high taxes of pig slaughtering, some villagers chose to stop raising; some selected to evade the taxes silently. No matter of

⁵. In China, pork without the chop of a related department cannot be sold in the market.

what practice they chose, they villagers had the normative consensus that the taxes were unreasonably high. According to the villagers, evading taxes is a common practice in villages. It was seriously criticized by the official newspaper in which the old tune was repeated without any creativity -- "It is an honour to pay taxes and fees, and it is shameful to evade tax."; "Evading the slaughtering tax is an illegal behavior"; "The local governments have to actively stop these criminal activities." There were some private slaughterhouses set up by the villagers. The butchers privately slaughtered the pig at midnight for the villagers. Villagers like Brother Xin were willing to sell pigs to these private slaughterhouses because not only did they not have to pay the slaughtering tax, but they could also get a higher price. Then butchers wholesaled to pork to the pork sellers or would directly sell to other villagers. Staying in Ku Village, sometimes I saw some hawkers selling pork to the villagers. Of course, the price was lower than in the market.

There were many different tactics the villagers adopted in evading the slaughtering taxes. Some villagers even altered the old receipts of slaughtering tax in cheating the staff of the Industrial and Commercial Bureau; some also borrowed the receipts of slaughtering tax from other villagers; and some bribed the staff of the Department of Quarantine to issue the certificates of quarantine.

To the villagers, they knew that private slaughtering had violated the law of the government. But in the Ku Village, nobody intended to report this to the village cadres. Also, the village cadres often kept "one eye open and one eye closed" because they knew the villagers dared to offend them nowadays. According to Secretary Songsheng, there were cadres of the neighbouring village whose pomelo trees were destroyed by the villagers in the night. And the cadres had no evidence to prosecute the suspected villagers. That is why the cadres said "*mingqiang yiduo, anjian nanfang*" (it is easy to dodge a spear in the open, but hard to guard against an arrow shot from the dark, i.e. better the devil you know than the devil you do not know). So the tacit and complicity enabled the villagers like Brother Xin be possible to evade taxes.⁶

6.5. *Resistance to the Multifarious Fees Collection*

The central government tried to stop the multifarious fee collection of the local government, but as the villagers often said "*shang you zheng ce, xia you dui ce*" (those above have policy, those below have their counter-measure), the local government created new items in the name of different excuse to siphon off anything from the peasants' purse. In the following, I just select two cases to illustrate how the Ku villagers resisted the unreasonable collection of fee.

"Gongchandang is good in naming"

During the period of "*yan da*" in 1995, the villagers who owned a motorbike had to be very careful because there was a point of checkpoint at the highway. The police would stop the motorbike in random and check their license. Anyone who failed to provide the drivers license and vehicle registration would be fined by the police. There was no standard fine, but which depended on the police in charge on that day. If you were from the same village, the fine was lighter; if you had some *guanxi* with the police or other department of the government, you could get an exemption; if you did not have any *guanxi* network, you would be fined heavier. Anyone who refused to pay the fine would have their motorbike confiscated. To the villagers, it had nothing to do with "keeping the order of transportation and the security of people's lives" as the newspaper claimed, but a good opportunity for the local government and its staff to make money and stuff their own pockets.

According to the new regulation in 1995, every diver had to take a driving examination and get a driver's license. Anyone who bought a motorbike also had to register their vehicle with the Transportation Department (*ruhu*). The *ruhu* fee is about 2,000 yuan. To the villagers, it was really expensive. In Ku Village, a few got a driver's license and registered their motorbikes. Apart from these, they need to make a vehicle license too. Of course, when they were going to get their licenses, they had to pay different kinds of fees, e.g. an examination fee, license fee, registration fee and so on. Wen-ming, the new village head, was one of the few who

⁶. Although some villagers were jealous of Brother Xin, they still did not intend to report to the village cadres because they did not want to hurt the personal relationship (*ganqing*) between them.; at the same time they often said "I don't care the business of others" (*shibu guanji, jibulaoxin*).

had paid all the fees which cost about 3000 yuan. He told me that his motorbike cost about 7,800 yuan, and when adding the fee, he paid more than ten thousand yuan. The villagers thought it was ridiculous to pay a fee on so many items. Brother Xin was the one who refused to pay all the fees. He rationalized his own argument in the following way,

Driving a motorbike is a simple thing. Even the women know how to drive. Why do we have to take an examination? Examination is just an excuse for them to take our money. I didn't pay my registration fee either. I have made a calculations, and you know, my motorbike is a cheap one. It is not worthwhile to pay such an expensive registration fee. I only travel from the village to Songkou town. *Yan da* is only temporary, after that, no one will care whether you have a license or not.

Brother Feng suddenly came home from Guangzhou during the period of *yan da*. He was a truck driver. Based on the new regulations of traffic control, a drivers license and vehicle registration had to be examined and revived (*nian shen*) every year. Prior to this regulation, drivers could take the examination and revision in other regions or provinces. But the new regulation required the drivers to the examination and revision in the place where the license was originally issued. Like the villagers, he thought it was a policy the government had adopted to make money. In the villagers' term, it was government's "*jiliang*" (bad way). Different to Xin's argument, he put an additional step to question in the *zeren* of the government.

The new regulation really causes lot of trouble. I have to stop my job and come home. I think I still have to wait for a week. You know, Gongchandang is very inefficient. Anyone who wants to get back their license quickly has to *zou houmen* (walking through the back door) by sending the staff of the Transportation Department gifts. The Transportation Department in Songkou would collect the licenses and then send them to the county's Transportation Department. Then they would wait for the licenses to be returned to the township. There was a good excuse for the township to charge us service charge as they sent the license for us. Gongchandang is really good in naming. Not only driver's licenses and vehicle registration, but my truck also has five other licenses to renew. Each license costs me about 400 yuan. Every year the renewal fee costs me several thousands. The government does nothing for us, but steal half of my income from our pocket. It is really unreasonable.

Feng also told us stories of how the police making money through different methods at the highway within Guangdong. One of the stories exemplifies this,

Everyday on Guangdong's highway, the police set up a checkpoint. When they stop your vehicle and when they want to get your money, they can fine you with any excuse, for example, an expired license, speeding, unclean vehicle.... One day, I saw a big joke! There was a new truck stopped by a policeman. He examined the truck for a long time, but couldn't find any excuse to fine that driver. In the end, he let the truck go. I think the driver was very angry for being checked for a long time. So he closed his door heavily. The policeman stopped the truck again and pulled the driver out. He found the driver was shirtless. So he fined the driver in the name of "destroying the healthy image of drivers". Suddenly, he found the driver wearing slippers. What a poor guy! The driver was fined again because according to the regulations, no driver can wear slipper while driving.

I am not sure whether the story is true or not, but I am sure that story telling and story making is one of the most powerful ways for the villagers to negate the image of the government and form their intersubjectivity. They circulate these stories in everyday conversations, but nobody can identify who is the story maker when the stories spread from the first person to ten people, and even to hundreds of people.

In addition to story making, the villagers had their tactics to avoid the checking and fining by the police. They changed their route to townships as Brother Moi. They also inquired about the checkpoints from those just coming back from township before they went to the town. They also went to townships in the evening rather than during the day for avoid being checked. In short, they rational calculators who rationally calculated ways to reduce their loss by choosing the safest ways.

"The River is ours"

One day in 1995, the hydroelectric power station posted an announcement for a new electric fee (*dian fei*) which would increase to 8 jiao per kilowatt-hour. The Ku villagers felt discontent with the increased rate. So they sent several representatives to see the head of hydropower station and bargained to maintain their rate at 4.5 jiao per kilowatt-hour. Their argument was that the hydropower station occupied much arable land of Ku Village, so the station did have to compensate their lost land by offering them a preferential rate, and their electric fee could not be set at the same standard as other villages. The head of the station could not make the decision and passed the information onto the Songnan township government.

The township sent people to mediate the dispute between the Ku villagers and the hydropower station. They held a meeting at the office of the station and invited the Ku villagers to join in. Almost all the young villagers joined the meeting to be supportive (*zhuzhang shengshi*). During the meeting, they had an animated debate where they individually tried to validate their arguments. The Ku villagers maintained their position as before, but to the officials, the ownership of land still belonged to the government, which had the right to design uses for the land. Thus, there were no questions of occupation and compensation. But the Ku villagers insisted that the electric fee was set at 4.5 jiao per kilowatt-hours. In the end, they failed in gaining a compromise, and the station maintained the new rate.

The Songnan hydra electric power station was established by the commune in the 1970s and provided electricity to the villages of Songnan Commune. It was located at the Ku Village and occupied several mu of fields. The villagers always paid the same rate as other villages without any complaint. But since the 1990s, the electric rate increased quickly -- from 3 jiao per kilowatt-hour in the 1980s to 8 jiao per kilowatt-hour in 1995. The villagers thought the increased rates were unreasonable. I think the villagers could not accept the new rate because they consumed more electricity than before. Based on my own survey, most households had a high power consumption due to electrical appliances like TVs, radios and electric stoves. Increasing electric rate meant multiplying their expenditure each months. So the villagers collectively refused to pay the electric fee. Cowardly villagers also followed the masses because anyone who paid the fee would be gossiped about by the others as "having no code of brotherhood" (*mei yiqi*) or "showing off their wealth" (*bai kuoqi*).

Then transpired a "guerrilla war" (*you ji zhan*), in villager's terms, between the hydropower station and the villagers. The hydropower station cut the electric wires of Ku Village as punishment for rejecting to pay. But the villagers reconnected the mains again and destroyed the electric meter inwardly. The station responded by putting all the meters together and locked them up into a box. Then the young villagers secretly pried open the box and destroyed the meters again in the night. The station was unable to detect who destroyed these meters. Since 1993, the Ku villagers have not paid a coin to the station.

However, on the 28th December in 1995, the *Law of Electric Power* was passed by the Standing Meeting of National People's Congress, and it was formally carried out on the 1st of April 1996. The villagers sensed that the struggled for the electric fee was still going on and in their everyday exchange, the issue about the electric rate was raised. At the moment, they also discussed the tactics of how to fight the collection against of the electric fee. The following is one of their daily conversations in Brother Qi-yuan's house.

One day I went to visit Brother Qi-yuan with other villagers. Qi-yuan opened his refrigerator and took out some fruit and served us bottles of beer.

Uncle Guang said: "Qi-yuan, your refrigerator is very profitable with free electricity."

Qi-yuan replied: "I think it is only temporary. They will collect the fee again."

Uncle Guang: "Yes, I know it is temporary."

Qi-yuan: "Did you read the newspaper? The law of electric power has been passed. It is impossible for us to have free electricity any longer."

Uncle Guang made the old argument: "I agree that we have to pay. But the question is how much. The power station is located in our village and it occupies our land. According to reason, they should look after us a little bit, and it is reasonable to compensate us for our loss."

Qi-yuan: "No, no, no. I think if you still use this argument, you won't win. You know, the time the station was set up in collective era, and there was no division of land. So there was nothing called 'making a requisition of land'. All the land, even the labour, belonged to the collective. They didn't have to consult your opinion concerning the construction of the power station, not to mention compensation."

Brother Xin: "That's exactly what they said. Do you remember their argument in the last meeting? They said times were different and we couldn't mix up things from Mao and Deng. That's why they refused to reduce our electric fee."

Qi-yuan: "Right, in Mao's era, there was no any private land. How can we ask them to compensate for our land. But I still think we have strong points."

Brother Xin: "What are those?"

*Qi-yuan: "We can argue that since the building of the hydropower station, the dam has affected the water flow and water quality. We *Gucun ren* (people of Ku Village) drink the river water generation after generation. But the hydro-station has affected*

our living condition, so we have to spend our money to dig wells. It is reasonable for the hydropower station to compensate us for our expenditures on the digging of the wells."

Moi: "That' a good idea. It sounds great."

Qi-yuan: "I think we can only bargain to pay less. It is impossible to be totally free of charge anymore. The law has been passed. Do you see the banner hanging in front of the station? It promotes 'the strictly prohibition of the illegal consumption of electric power'. They have given us a signal. "

Uncle Guang: "It's better to calmly discuss with them. It is unwise to confront the tough with toughness (ying peng ying). Gongchandang isn't afraid of direct confrontation. You see from the Tiananmen event that they can crack down on the confrontation with coercion. We must learn from that lesson."

Brother Xin: "Yes, maybe you're right."

This struggling was continued until I left Ku Village. I hope that there was not any violence or bloodshed in Ku Village. I think the villagers had generated experiences and tactics to deal with their everyday struggle. I think they must be aware of which is the safest way, when is the best time, and where is the best space to fight for their own interests and check the unreasonable extraction.

6.6. Discussion

Since May of 1928, according to the situation of the time, we have come out the simpler basic role of guerrilla warfare. That is "*di jing wo tui, di zhu rao, di pi wo da, di tui wo zui*" (when the enemy attacks, we retreat; when the enemy is stationed, we harass; when the enemy was tired, we attack; when the enemy retreats, we pursue and attack).

The movement of the army has to be secret and rapid. We have to employ the ingenious to swindle, seduce and confuse the enemy, e.g. making a feint to the east and attack in the west (*sheng dong ji xi*), suddenly attacking from the south and suddenly attacking from the north (*hu nan hu bei*); immediately attacking and immediately retreating (*ji da ji li*); and taking action at night (*ye jian xing dong*),....

-- Mao, December,
1936

The proletariat not only leads the struggle but also defines its targets, its methods, and the places and instruments for confrontation ...

-- Michel Foucault 1977:216

Studying peasant resistance in taxation is no longer a new issue in peasant studies, even in China studies (e.g. Bernhardt, 1991; Lucien, 1986; Duara, 1986; Perry, 1985). What the literature largely ignores is that the construction and creation of peasant activism in resistance. In the case of Ku village, the villagers' fighting against the "unreasonable tax" and multifarious impositions rest on both the ability of manipulating the guerrilla strategies as well as the ability of fashioning and constructing a vision, symbols and framework.

In the villagers' everyday discourse, they had constructed a framework of argument that divided taxes into "reasonable tax" and "unreasonable tax". This division wholly rested on their conception of *guanxi* and *zeren*. If the government had provided some resources, assistance, input or services, they would have thought it was reasonable to stake a claim on the produce or revenues from the sale of produce or service. It would have been their *zeren* to fulfill their payment. Where there was no input, service or resource, it was deemed quite "unreasonable" for the government to expect a return and the fact that it did so was attributed to the government's "greed" or interest in merely "taking money from the peasants' pockets" without providing "any return" or "gratitude". Basically, the villagers' framework of argument emerged from a historically specific set of circumstances in a reform era for the sake of countering the official discourse of taxation. In the reform era, a "new" knowledge and practice the taxation system was constructed by the government for the sake of extracting the resources and maintaining its revenue. In the official discourse, tax was defined and legitimized by the state in terms of citizenship which was linked with the language of rights and laws. Paying taxes was normalized in discourse as the practices of modernization and a market economy. Anyone who rejected the taxes was labeled as "abnormal" which was defined in the legal terms as criminals (*fanzui fenzi*) or illegal elements (*bufa fenzi*).

In the battlefield of knowledge, however, villagers did not passively accept alien knowledge imposed by the government; rather, they also created their own

framework based on their conception of reciprocal relations and mutual obligations. Those governments that failed to fulfill their *zeren*, as defined by the villagers themselves, were irresponsible, and that nullified or "turned down" the exchange relationship; and for this reason their resistance to taxation was self-legitimized. Villagers' resistance to land taxes and pomelo taxes were again evident: they defined the ownership of land based on their interpretation. Most of the land for pomelo plantation was reclaimed by themselves without obtaining any assistance from the government. They thought of the wasteland as natural resource that was freely available for use and everyone had rights to access it. While the land was being used, one had exclusive rights to it. Therefore, they thought it was not their *zeren* to pay an unreasonable tax for the crops planted on "their" land. The villagers also perceived that they had fulfilled their *zeren* on the contracted land with *gongliang*; thus it was unreasonable again for the government to collect the land tax without providing any additional supplies.

The villagers not only voiced out their discontent and debated the nature of taxes, but also transformed their voices into active resistance. The villagers always avoided direct confrontation with the government because they knew that an open confrontation would probably be met with armed force bloodshed under the socialist state. The villagers overtly practiced *kangshui* in land contract fee and pomelo tax only when they thought they had formulated the strong points of argument. When they thought their action had violated the law of the state, e.g. the slaughtering tax and license fee, they silently evade the taxes "offstage". There were varieties of tactics including spreading rumours, feigned ignorance, underreporting, smuggling and so on being adopted by the villagers. These guerrilla strategies made villagers' resistance remain publicly invisible. Although there were not any formal organizations of resistance and collective action in Ku Village, the villagers practiced similar resistance every day for the shared reasons of material gain. They had the shared knowledge of "unreasonable tax" and "reasonable tax" and economic interest which made the cooperation among the villagers at the level of tacit. For instance, the villagers evading slaughtering taxes depended on the complicitious silence of other villagers to escape detection of local cadres.

In short, there are no riots, no demonstrations, no petitions, no violent confrontations, and no protests of any kind, but the unannounced achievement of the resistance has been impressive. The term "*youji zhan*" (guerilla) was invented by Mao and this strategy was also applied by Mao in the peasant war. But guerrilla strategy resistance is nothing new to peasants because it is the wisdom of local people, which is generated by them in everyday resistance. They have been well manipulated by the villagers in a defensive effort to defeat or minimize a direct appropriation from the government. Of course, the struggle is still going on, and I dare not to romanticize the power of the villagers, although they had successfully check the tax collection from the government in these cases. Maybe one day they will have to surrender their "money in the pocket" to the socialist government when it decides to adopt coercive methods to collect taxes. But I believe that they will generate some new ways of resistance which we cannot imagine at this moment.

Chapter 7: *Xingan baobei* -- Ku Villager's Dreaming of and Struggling to Have a Son

13th November of 1993 was the happiest day of Fu-sheng's family. Fu-sheng worshipped the gods of heaven and earth as well as gave thanks to their ancestors because his dream had come true -- he finally got a son after having two previous children. Today was his son's birthday. He invited some of the close friend and relative to have a lunch to celebration. I was one of them. The guests brought different kinds of gifts for his son. During the lunch, people were also chatting about family planning in China.

Uncle Bin: "Fu-sheng, you are so lucky to have a son. You have to thank for our ancestors."

Uncle Wen: "Bin is right. As I know, someone in Yaoshan (a neighbouring village) couldn't get a son until the eight birth."

Hok-Bin: "How can he do that? Doesn't the government intervene into all these births?"

Uncle Wen: "Of course that guy had an excess births secretly. If it is discovered by the cadres, they will be fined. The rich people don't care about the fine. They just pay it and keep on bearing the babies."

Uncle Qiang: "Don't exaggerate. If they were caught in the "gaochao" (high tide), they would be taken for sterilization or abortion."

Hok-Bin: "Brother Fu-sheng, how much have you been fined by the government?"

Fu-sheng: "I still haven't paid the fine. But I know I have to pay the fine sooner or later. Fine, it is a worthwhile fine in exchange for a son."

Hok-Bin: "Why do you insist on having a son?"

Fu-sheng felt embarrassed to answer my question. Uncle Qiang answered instead, "It's really sad if you don't have a son. Who is going to look after you when you are old? The daughter is the outsider, like water spilled out..."

When we were chatting, Fu-sheng's son was carried out from the room by his wife. He had just woken up. People expressed what a lovely baby he was and turned to play with him. Uncle Wen's wife: "A Moi, so sweet you are, let grandaunt hold

you.." *The baby didn't want to be held by others. His mother said: "A Moi is still sleepy."*

What they called the baby made me feel so puzzled. "Moi" is Hakka dialect, which meant "baby girl" or "little girl". Why did they call a baby boy as a baby girl? I asked several old ladies in the village and they gave me similar answers.

It was an old custom. People in the village believed that there was a balance between the number of living and the dead. If anyone died it meant there was a new life coming. The ghosts in Hell had to queue up to wait for someone to die. For reincarnation, the ghosts or the devils often came to attack newborn babies because their life was so weak. They preferred to attack boys rather than girls because the lives of baby boys are more precious and valuable. When a baby boy died, there was one more quota of male in the book of reincarnation. To protect a baby boy from the attack of the devil, the villagers addressed the baby boy as a baby girl. They thought it could cheat the devil.

* * * *

They dream of having sons; they dream of having grandsons; they dream of "keeping the incense smoke burning". To Ku villagers, a "son" is very important in many aspects -- a son is a permanent labourer of the family; a son is a source of support and security in old age; a son is obligated to his father and his father's lineage. However, the population policies implemented by the government in the reform period has made many of the Chinese peasants "fond of dreams that are difficult to come true" (*meimeng nanyuan*).

Since 1949, in the name of modernization, the state ordered and disciplined the bodies and minds of the Chinese people through the introduction of modern education, policing, censuses, registration of birth and deaths, and new ideas on health and hygiene culminating in the medical inspection of bodies and the campaign for

eradication of disease.¹ Family planning was one of the modern techniques which directly shaped the bodies of the women and controlled the reproduction of the family. Although population control was not a modern thing, as M. Foucault (1980) noticed, it had never been so emphasized and integrated into such an intricate control system of the modern state.² He asserted that,

The great eighteenth-century demographic upswing in Western Europe, the necessity for coordinating and integrating it into the apparatus of production, and the urgency of controlling it with finer and more adequate power mechanisms cause "population," with its numerical variables of space and chronology, longevity and health, to emerge not only as a problem but as an object of surveillance, analysis, intervention, modification, etc. The project of a technology of population begins to be sketched: demographic estimates, the calculation of the pyramid of ages, different life expectations and levels of mortality, studies of the reciprocal relations of growth of wealth and growth of population, various measures of incitement to marriage and procreation, the development of forms of education and professional training.... The biological traits of a population become relevant factors for economic management, and it becomes necessary to organize around them an apparatus which will ensure not only their subjection but the constant increase of their utility (1980: 171-172).

In the early 1980s, the intervention of the socialist state into the domestic arena of reproduction has intensified after the invention of a family planning policy. Woman's body became the battlefield of the socialist state and family. To the family, a woman's body is the way to fulfill dreams of her husband and her husband's family, and maybe herself; to the state, a woman's body is a focus in fulfilling its goal of population control. It was repeatedly addressed by the socialist government that population control was a determinant factor of the economic reform and Chinese modernization project; however, on the other hand, it was said by the villagers that having a son was very important to their family and kin. "*Gong shuo gong you li, po shuo po you li*" (grandfather and grandmother each says he/she is right), both parties claimed to be in the right. But policy has been formed and carried out, the state's will

¹. Socialist states seems not an exception. Many scholars (e.g. Michell, 1988, Arnold, 1993, Chakrabarty, 1994, Asdar Ali, 1996 & so on) have shown how the colonial project in the colonial societies colonize the people through the deployment of the modern knowledge.

². Not only Foucault, there are many other scholars that hold similar views, e.g. Treichler, 1990; Jacobus, 1990; Kamran Asdar Ali, 1996.

could not be changed by the "ignorant and backward" peasants. Facing this "disastrous" policy, to guarantee having a son, the angered villagers rose up and engaged in various forms of resistance such as escaping, simply paying the fine for exchanging a child, rumour spreading, threatening and so on. On the other hand, lacking in reliable and effective means to ensure the implementation of a birth control policy, many village cadres frequently turned to coercion. The result is that violent clashes have grown in recent years in rural China (e.g. Li and O'Brien, 1996; Aird, 1990; Greenhalgh, 1994; Wasserstrom, 1984). Apart from resistance in action, people in Ku Village also carried out resistance via discursive penetration. They were capable of constructing their framework of argument to delegitimize the state policy. Again, in their everyday discourse, the principle of *zeren* or mutual obligation was adopted by the villagers to define the government policies which rested on the similar division of what was "reasonable" from "unreasonable".

In this Chapter, to understand the conflict between the socialist state and the villagers on the issue of birth control, I not only examine the peasants' resistance in action, but also examine how they made the counter-discourse, through which I try to understand the cultural meaning of having a son to Chinese peasants and its relationship to their family and kinship, economic structure of rural society and local religion. The following questions will be answered: How do the Chinese government make the discourse and carry out the population policy? What is the cultural meaning of "having a son" in rural China? How does the fertility culture influence the birth preference of the villagers? What is the difference between the official and villagers' views of birth control? How do the villagers apply the similar framework resting on the division of what was "reasonable" from "unreasonable" to fight for a son and fight against the birth control policies? How do village cadres implement this difficult state policy?

7.1. Official Discourse on Population Control since the 1980s

In the late 1970s, under the influence of ideology of modernism, the Chinese government was alarmed by the total sum of China's population and the projection of the population growth rates. It was because the age structure of China's population

with about 65% of the population under thirty were expected to give birth in coming years and the total population would reach 1.3 billion after twenty years. In the modernist view of development or in the name of Marxist population theory, economic growth was regarded as negatively correlated to the population growth. The "great architect" of China's economic reform Deng Xiao-ping had made the clear explanation in his address on March 30, 1979 entitled *Jianchi Sixian Yuanze (the Insisting Four Principles)*:

Now China has population 0.9 billion and peasants occupies 80%. A large population has its advantages, but it also has its disadvantages. In the condition of underdevelopment, the large population will cause serious problems of food, education and jobs. Thus, we have to strongly promote family planning, even the population will not quickly increase after several year, but it is still a problem during this period.... Although the area of our country is large, the arable farming area is small. The problem of limited arable land and a large agricultural population is not easy to solve (my own translation).

Almost all of the prominent Chinese demographers held these views (e.g. Tian, 1997; Liu, 1988; Hou, 1991; Ma, 1987). The census data was "scientifically" represented by the experts as "reality" of an alarming population increase and its impact on the future food distribution in China. Numerical and statistical analyses were used to prove the relationship between overpopulation and the narrow strip of farmland. For improving the per capita availability of food, clothing, housing, health care, education, transportation, and consumer goods, to ease problems in employment, and to speed the pace of overall economic development, carrying out a new strict single-family policy became necessary to the socialist government.

While the rural reform in the late 1970s was introduced to stimulate economic growth, the one-child policy announced a month later was to slow down the population growth. The rationale for this policy was to promote China's development and modernization. Vice Premier Chen Mu-hua clearly justified the one-child policy in the following:

National economic development must observe the law of planned and proportionate development. This law requires not only that the... production of material means ... but also that human reproduction develop in a planned way. Thus, the planned control of population increase in our nation ... is not a subjective and arbitrary decision;

rather, it is dictated and demanded by the socialist mode of production....

To a great extent, the degree of a nation's potential for increasing capital accumulation, and the pace of raising the people's living standards and of increasing national power, are determined by the relationship between the growth rate of the economy and the growth rate of population (1979: 94, translated by Pi-chao Chen).

At the beginning, the one-child policy encouraged all couples of the Han majority to limit their family to have one child in order to ensure the achievement of the national population size target of 1.2 billion in the year 2000. The families and couples were asked to recognize that the economic costs of having many children and persuaded to adopt family planning as a "voluntary and non-coercive" choice (Open Letter, 1980). The old family model was rejected as the "residue of feudalism" (*fengjian canyu*) and the new family model was promoted in the following rhetoric:

"Zhongsheng zhisheng yige haizi guangrong" (It is glorious to have only one children in the life)

"Shidai butong, nannu dou yiyang" (The time is different, male or female doesn't matter)

"Wei kongzhi renkou zhengzhang, zaori shixian sihua, zhongsheng zhisheng yige haizi" (To control the population growth, to achieve modernization, we have to keep one child in the life)

"Shixian yidui hufu zhi shengyu yige haizi, shi yichang yifeng yisu de dashi" (A couple who has only one child is a important event of changing values and customs)

"Dangyuan ganbu bixu daitou kefu ziji tounaozhong de fengjian sixiang, qu diao meiyou shengyun nanhai jiu buneng chuanzhong jiedai de cuowu guannian" (The Communist cadres have to play a leading role in cleansing the feudal ideology in their mind, and the wrong conception of son being the only way of family continuity)

To guaranteeing the fulfillment of the population goal set by the government, in 1982, family planning was defined into the Constitution of PRC. In Article 49 of the Constitution, it was defined that, as citizens of PRC, "a couple had the duty and obligation to carry out family planning" (see Picture 7.1 & 7.2) The policy was strictly implemented in the early 1980s. The system of incentives (rewards) and disincentives (penalties) were implemented in most provinces (Banister, 1984 & 1985; Aird, 1982; Goodstadt, 1982; Croll, 1985 & 1994).³ Although the government

³. There was no standardized reward and penalties attached to the policy. These were largely dependent on the will and wealth of individual work units, neighbourhoods, and villages in which the couples were employed or resided.

encouraged couples to have one child, in the early 1980s, there were also some exceptions to the one-child rule which comprised a wide number of concessions permitting a second birth, including health defects, sterility and remarriage. In the countryside, there were supplementary concessions to kinship and the continuation of the family line.⁴ At the beginning of the one-child policy, the government emphasized education and persuasion in the implementation of the policy. But the Chinese government perceived the population problem and the rising birth rate in the countryside to be too serious to allow any relaxation of the policy. So from 1983 to 1984, several family planning campaigns were carried out to achieve their goals of population control. In Guangdong, "compulsory sterilization" was adopted by the government for forcing either party, husband or wife, of those couples who already had two children to practice birth control. However, the coercion of the Chinese population policy had sparked a wave of national and international concern, as well as increased the unpopularity of the policy.

Starting from the mid-1980s, the policy's goals and means were relaxed and softened. It was reflected in the change of the national target for the year 2000 from strictly 1.2 billion to about 1.2 billion by the Chinese government in 1985. In late 1988 the minister in charge of the State Family Planning Commission announced that the population was likely to top 1.27 billion by century's end (Greenhalgh, 1990). The relaxation of the one-child policy was also reflected in the condition of permitting a second birth (Davin, 1990). A second child was newly permitted in the countryside where an only son gave birth to a daughter, where the continuation of the family line was threatened by the birth of a single daughter or where the husband had moved into the wife's household after marriage and the first child was a daughter. According to the provincial document of Guangdong and that of Mei County in 1986, the number of conditions under which rural couples were allowed to have two children was increased to five. It was clearly stated that "We encourage the rural population to

⁴. According to Croll (1994:189), generally, the Chinese government permitted the couple to have a second child "if one son had been born for three consecutive generation, if both spouses were only children, if marriage was uxorilocal (the groom had moved into the bride's household) with a wife an only child, and if a household had only one son capable of begetting heirs. Additionally, households in mountainous regions which had economic difficulties were permitted to give birth to a second child." According to a Japanese demographer, Ruolinjinzi (1994:51-61), there are some variations among provinces. Readers can see the tables constructed by Ruolinjinzi for comparing the family planning regulations between ten provinces and cities in detail.

have one child and the second child is permitted under the plan, quotas and four year intervals. We strictly prohibit the third child and unplanned second fertility and unmarried birth," (see Regulation, 1986). So in reality, by the end of decade, the majority of rural couples could have a second child.

7.2. *The Reasons for Having a Son*

The Chinese government's population policy was obviously unwelcome by rural society. To understand the reasons of the villagers' resistance to the birth control, we had to learn to listen to the villager's voice.

Getting information from 45 households, there were 30 inhabitants that told me they definitely wanted to have a son. Most villagers thought that if they could have a son, they just wanted two children. I also asked them to give reasons for wanting to have a son (see Table 7.1). Their answers reflect that a pure economic interest account of the villagers' struggle for a son seems to be inadequate. In their voices, I found that the economic reason was often interwoven with the cultural meaning of having a son. "Old age supporting" (*lao you suo yi*) and "carrying on the family line" (*chuanzhong jiedai*) were the most important reasons rural couples of insisted on having sons in Ku Village.

Table 7.1 Reason For Having a Son (total Number = 45)

Reasons	Number of Villagers Answered "Yes"
Old Age Support	32 (71.1%)
Continuity of Family Line	30 (66.7%)
Local Custom	25 (55.6%)
State Policy	16 (35.6%)
Requirement of Parents	16 (35.6%)
Economic Reason	15 (33.3%)
Guarantee of Child's Survival	14 (31.1%)
Large Family Has More Power	11 (20.0%)

Source: my own survey.

As one of my informant Uncle Xiang said:

No matter how harsh the penalty is, in the mind of "uncle peasants" (*nongmin bobo*), they always hope their house keys can be transferred to their sons. The daughter is the outsider, like the water spilled out, we have no reason to give the key to the outsider. All right?

Uncle Qiang also expressed the same opinion. He said:

The daughter is not ours. At last, she has to follow her husband. So everyone wants to have a son. If you haven't a son, you will be very pitiful. Who can take care of you when you are old?... I don't understand why our government doesn't allow us to have a son?

Traditionally, the villagers were naturally supported by their son(s) in old age after they lost their ability to do labour in the old age. Although the socialist government tried to develop their social welfare services such as a *wubaohu* system (five guarantees system) for supporting the elderly without children. However, the "five guarantees" offered to the childless elderly was only at the minimal level. These minimal support revealed the fact that any rural resident wishing a good life in old age had no choice but to have a son. The dismantling of the collective made this system difficult to implement. In the absence of central allocation, local government funds were depleted. So the *wubaohu* system, still existed in name, but was largely determined by the economic power of individual village. Even though the elderly in Ku Village can get support from the villagers' committee, their lives were far from the perfection as the traditional ideal of "spending their remaining years in happiness" (*anxiang wannian*). With financial support from the overseas Chinese, the township government had set up the old age home (*jinglaoyuan*) to support the elderly who did not have any sons or daughters. However, in the eye of the Ku Villagers, it was a miserable place to live in one's old age. I had an opportunity to visit the *Songnan Jinglaoyuan* with Brother Ying. The Building of the *jinglaoyuan* was quite nice (see Picture 7.3). It was a two floor flat. There was an office, a public kitchen, two public toilet and about twenty single rooms. There were a superintendent, a staff, and a cook who worked for the *jinglaoyuan*. Most of the old people lived there were incapable of supporting themselves due to illness. Though the government could support their basic needs of living, it was not good enough. On their notice board, I found they only received about 57.75 yuan a month from the government. According to the living standard of Mei County, it was pretty low. Now the rooms were still not fully

occupied and there were only 13 people living there. Most of the single elderly did not want to live in *jinglaoyuan* according to the superintendent.

In the villagers' imagination, *jinglaoyuan* was a terrible place. Uncle Huang said:

That isn't a place for the elderly to have an easy life. As I know, the elders still have to work there. They raise pigs, grow vegetables and so on. Basically, they still have to depend on themselves.

Brother Ying also said:

People live there just because they have no choice. Nobody wants to stay in this pitiful place.

In Ku Village, the pity story of Grandaunt Xiao also taught the villagers a lesson that "without a son one would be very miserable in old age." Grandaunt Xiao was about 80 years old. She had not borne a son. Although she had adopted a son, the son treated her badly and did not want to live with her. He also did not support her life, and her life mainly depended on the support from her overseas relatives. One time when she carelessly fell down and broke her hands, nobody could take care of her. Most of the villagers felt very sorry and tried their best to help this poor old lady in different ways. When I was talking about family planning with Lian, he referred to grandaunt Xiao's case:

I don't understand why I cannot have a son. If we don't have a son, we will be very sad in our old age. The state won't take care of our livelihood. Do you know Grandaunt Xiao? Her experience shows us that having your own son is very important. Although she has adopted a son, the son isn't her own. Last time while she was hurt, he didn't even come to visit her. I don't want to follow in her footsteps.

It was commonly shared by the villagers that the non-existence of old-age support and social security from the government was the their main reason of having a son. Put in other way, the Ku villagers' argument and resistance to birth control policies centered on a simple equation -- support for the government's birth control policies had to be matched by its obligation to provide care for the elderly. Uncle Huang declared clearly why he could not accept the state population policy as well,

... our government does nothing for the aged people in rural areas. We haven't any old-age pension. We haven't any old-age welfare. That's why every family in rural areas wants to have a son. We have to

depend our son in our old age. If not, we will be very pitiful when we become old...

Uncle Bi, the former village leader, also showed his understanding as to why the peasants preferred having a son and countered the single-child family policy. He told me:

Ai! The situation is quite different between the rural and urban areas. In the urban areas, workers can get salaries from the government, even after retirement. They have "iron bowls" (*tie fanwan*), but the peasants don't. No matter how harsh the state policy is, once they get "iron bowls", they must abide by the state policy. But the state doesn't provide any "iron bowl" to the peasants, so how can you persuade them not to want a son?

Not only the old villagers, the younger generation, like brother Xin, also showed their preference toward having a son. His argument is shown as below,

I think our situation is different from yours. In rural society, we have no other choices. We have to get married and we have to have a son. Everyone has to repeat this cycle. When we become old, we have to rely on our son. You know, we have no retirement pay. It is also quite hard for us to have savings too.

The villagers repeatedly complained of the government's not fulfilling its *zeren* to provide elderly care and took it as their reason to support their resistance. However, I do not think that all the villagers would be willing to follow the state policy even if the state provided them old-age care. This is because "having a son" is not only for the sake of security in old age, but is also related to moral *zeren* between them and their family and ancestors.

The issue of old age support implies the moral social relationship between a son and his parents. It is socially accepted that parents have the *zeren* of feeding and educating their children, in return, the sons have the *zeren* to support their aged parents in return. This is a consensus between the parents and the children. Anyone breaking down this relationship of moral reciprocity or not trying hard to fulfill their obligation will be condemned as not filial piety (*buxiao*) by other members of society. To the villagers, implementing birth control meant the government has to take up the *zeren* of supporting the elderly. If not, they felt it was unreasonable to accept this policy, as having sons or grandsons to support them in their old age would be necessary.

Compared with the reason of "maintaining the family line", "supporting parent during old age" was a short-term moral *zeren*. In rural China, all the male villagers also have to fulfill their long-term moral *zeren* of reproduction of the family line. There is a deeper cultural meaning of continuity of family line in rural society. To the villagers, their teleological concern of life is manifested and fulfilled through the most secular way -- that of reproduction. Reproduction lets the line of their ancestors become immortal because their children are thought to be a continuous form of their body and spirit and they themselves are the continuity of their parents' body and spirit. Only then is their dream of eternal life possible to fulfill through the continuity of their sons and grandsons. So to the villagers, the reproduction of sons is their long-term moral obligation to their parents and ancestors which can not be shirked. Failing to reproduce a son means the *zhong* (seed) of their ancestors would stop or distinguish. And they would then be condemned as *buxiao* (unfilial piety). So in Chinese society, "may you die without sons" or "may you be the last of your line" (*dunzi juesun*) is the most venomous curse and it is seen as the most unfortunate of situations in life.

People have different dreams and wishes in this life (*jinsheng*). When they cannot fulfill their dreams and tasks in this life, sons become the only one who will/can continue their tasks and fulfill such dreams. For example, in Ku Village, building a new big house was always the wish of the villagers. But not all the villagers could fulfill this dream in this life, especially poorer families. Their sons or descendants became their hope to complete their task. One of the villagers, Uncle Dong, told me that building a new house was his father's dream. He would try to fulfill his father's dream during his lifetime. If he could not fulfill it, he would leave the unfinished task to his son. In this sense, sons also play the role of fulfilling hopes and dreams in this life.

I also noticed that in the villagers' mind there was a conception of duality of life - "*jin sheng*" (this life) and "*lai sheng*" (the next life). To them, their sons and grandsons not only support their old age in this life, but their descendants also support their next life through burning joss stick and offering sacrifices. Stopping the family line will force their ancestors in the next life to becoming the "*guhun yegui*" (the hungry ghosts without offerings). So in rural society, "keeping the incense

smoke burning” and “continuing the incense smoke at the ancestral shrine” represent the villagers' concern of the next life. Continuing the family line becomes the long-term moral obligation of sons to their fathers and to their father's lineage. In return, breeding and educating children, and helping their sons to get married and start their son's career becomes parents' obligation or *zeren* to both their sons and ancestors.

The conception of continuity within a family line is rooted in the villagers' minds. To them, it is as natural as eating, and in their everyday practices, the morality of continuing the family line is reproduced and generated. While I was staying in Ku Village, there were two events that happened in which the importance of having a son was obviously manifested.

Crying for Losing a Son

The sky was gloomy, that made people feel a little bit sad. When I was chatting with the villagers in Uncle Guang's house, someone came in and told us a bad news. Brother Hua's younger son had died of asthma that morning. His son was only two years old. That villager said,

When I passed Hua's door, I heard him and his wife cry loudly. Poor thing. I knew his son had died. His son had suffered from asthma for a long time, and during the last several days, his condition had suddenly worsened. They immediately sent him to the hospital, but his condition became worse. I suspect the doctor used the wrong medicine.

Aunt Xiang sighed and showed her sorrow,

*What a pity! I think Hua must be very sad. He loved this son more than any one else. You know, today everyone can only have two children. Nobody can afford to lose one. A son is as precious as his heart (*xingan baobei*).*

Aunt Guang added a few words,

The saddest thing is that Hua's wife was sterilized after she gave birth the second time. Songsheng will be cursed by the villagers because she mobilized Hua's husband to be sterilized.

The villager who brought the news to us continued to say,

I think after Hua's case, nobody will be so foolish as to accept sterilization just after a second birth. The government never considers the difficulty of the peasant. How can a "castrated cat" still give birth!

The news of Hua's son was quickly spread throughout Ku Village. All the villagers shook their heads and heaved a sigh. Everybody was talking about the matter; some criticized the population policy of the government; some suggested that Hua adopt another child from other villages as a guarantee.

Weeping for the Father

The day after Hua's son died, Granduncle Liu died in a myocardial infarction too. He was seventy-five years old. He had four sons, three daughters, four grandsons and two granddaughters. I also participated in the traditional funeral of Granduncle Liu.

*After receiving the news of Granduncle's death, all his daughters and son-in-laws returned to Ku Village. All the true sons, daughters, grandsons and granddaughters in mourning had sacking draped over their shoulders (*pima daixiao*). They had to set up the mourning hall (*lingtang*) for the dead. The coffin containing a corpse (*lingjiu*) was put into a place behind the sacrificial table (*jitai*). This is where there was an enshrined tablet of deceased names, burning joss sticks and candles, offering sacrifices of wine, tea, fruit, chicken and so on. There was a pair of paper virgin boy and maiden keeping watch on either side of the sacrificial table. There were also many wreaths and flags were laid in the mourning hall (see Picture 7.4).*

*The memorial ceremony for Granduncle Liu was held on the day after he died. Most of the villagers such as the new village head Wenming, Uncle Wen, and the close relatives assisted to organize the ceremony and set up the mourning hall. The ceremony started at a good hour (*hao shichen*) in the afternoon. When it started, the sons and daughters in mourning began to cry loudly. One of the elders in Ku Village gave an elegiac address. The villagers and the relatives from outsides also came in succession to worship and bid farewell to the dead. Every visitor had to give the *baijin* (white money)⁵ to the family of the dead. Both the Xiaohuang Old People*

⁵. White money is money given to the family of the deceased by relatives.

Association and the Songxi Primary School organized their worship teams to participate in the funeral ceremony. So in Ku Village, no matter if you were the old or the young all participated in these events.

They also invited a monk and two Buddhist nuns to come and hold the Buddhist rituals and recite scriptures for (chao du) releasing souls from purgatory (Picture 7.5). The relatives came from outside and some of the villagers were also invited to have dinner. After dinner, most of the villagers stayed at mourning hall. According to the old villagers, the soul of the dead would be lonely and they had to keep the hall lively. The funeral continued overnight and the sons and daughters of the dead had to keep vigil beside the coffin. The next morning, the coffin was sent to be buried by a team of people including family members, relatives, friends and primary school students (see Picture 7.6).

The funeral ceremony and other expense spent a lot of money. According to Uncle Wen, it was about twenty thousands yuan. In those few days, the villagers chatted about Granduncle Liu's death and his funeral. Granduncle Liu's death seemed to remind the villagers of the importance of having sons. The following were some of the villagers' discussion about Granduncle Liu's death.

"What the greatest blessing of Granduncle Liu! Full of posterity."

"Luckily he has so many sons and daughters. If not, how can they afford such a huge expense? Nowadays, it isn't easy to pay for a funeral."

"Granduncle Liu's funeral was so lively. Now every family only has two children. I wonder if funerals in the future can be done like that."

"Sons were the greatest blessing of Granduncle! If there were no sons, who can come to handle all these things for him?"

Through everyday life practices, knowledge and culture have been reproduced and generated. The death of a son or a father have taught the villagers what the meaning and significance of having a son. Nobody needed to teach you in formal education. The people, including the young school students, have accepted the fact that it is the moral obligation of sons through participating in a funeral ceremony without knowing what it is.

Apart from the cultural meaning of having a son, to the villagers, sons are also important to the economy of a family. Decollectivization increased the labour benefit of children which stimulated the fertility desire of the villagers, especially of sons, because the relationship between labour and income became even closer. Under the collective economic regime, the advantages of children, especially the son, had become minimal because the functions of children in a traditional family were partly taken over by a production team. In a traditional family, the important reason for desiring a son was to ensure economic security and be supported in old age, as well as to provide a permanent labour for the family. Sons were believed to bring more economic benefits than daughters as they would join their husbands' family at marriage. But in collective institutions, the collective guaranteed the basic livelihood of the old. The economic power of the daughter was equal to the son because they earned equal *gongfeng* (work points) in the collective. But after the dismantling of the collective, there was increasing evidence that family planning policies came into conflict with those of the responsibility production system. The number of family labourers would influence the income of the family. In the villagers' eyes, the son was not only a permanent labourer in a family, but he could also get another more labour from his wife's family. The belief that "in order to get rich, one must have more boys" is prevalent in rural China. "Daughters are like water spilled out" is the metaphor villagers have used to describe the less important role of a daughter. However, I would like to say that the villagers' practices, at least some of them, did not always match with what they said. Some daughters played important roles in the family. For example, Uncle Si relied on his daughter more than other villagers. This was first because his daughter, Sister Hui, lived in a neighbour village; second because his two sons all worked in the city. Sister Hui was not like "the water spilled out"; she still took care of her family after marriage. She and her husband came to visit Uncle Si at least once a month. In the harvest season, they also assisted in the fruit collection.

As the Ku villagers frequently said "*shi yu yuan wei*" (things do not always turn out the way one wishes), not all the villagers finally got a son. The alternative strategy was to either adopt a son or "*zhaoxu*". The adoption of a son is a popular

practice in rural China.⁶ In Ku Village, as I know, there were about four families who adopted a son from their close relatives, and the son would have the surname "Ku". "Zhaoxu" means that the wife's family seeks a husband for their daughter and asks the son-in-law to live in the wife's home. Their first grandson will use the surname of the wife's family. One of the inhabitants of Ku Village, Sister Feng's husband died several years ago. Because she did not have any son by her first husband, she sought a second husband to continue the family line for her first husband's family. In general, only a man who came from a poor family practiced "zhaoxu".

7.3. *The Local Practice of Birth Control*

In Ku Village, I often heard voices of discontent about the birth control from both sides -- villagers and cadres. To the villagers, they complained about the unreasonable population policy and its coercive means of implementation. To the village cadres, they complained about the difficulty of executing the birth control policy.

At the village level, the task of birth control was mainly implemented by the women's representative and other village cadres. Ling was the women's representative of Xiaohuang ADC. She was about 35 years old and had one son and one daughter. She was surnamed Ku, but she lived in the neighbour village called Shangping. I visited her several times. In our conversation, I got a broad picture of how the village cadres implemented the policy in the villages. Ling told me that the policy was transmitted from the township government. Every month, secretary Songsheng reported the task to the township government as well as received the new policies and tasks from above. Every year, the township government divided the family planning quotas to different ADCs. The quota was distributed by the *xiang* or township government according to the population of the locality. Ling told me that there were about 17 quotas of fertility they could get from the township government. Although I knew Ling well, every time I asked her about how they implemented birth control in the villages, she suddenly became a cadres of the village and not my friend. She got

⁶. See Waltner, Ann, 1990, *Getting an Heir: Adoption and the Construction of Kinship in late Imperial China*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.

used to speaking to me with official jargon when talking about implementation policies:

Basically we implement the policy based on the spirit and direction of the upper government. Not so bad, Xiaohuang does not exceed the quota of fertility every year.

She further explained her everyday task to me.

Basically, we know every household well. We know which household's son get married, and whose daughter-in-law becomes pregnant. We often have to visit the new and young couples repeatedly and have a heart-to-heart talk (*jiao xin*) with them and check up on their contraceptive practices and birth plans. We also have to try to educate (*jiaoyu*) them about the need to control fertility, and mobilize (*dongyuan*) the women to have intrauterine rings inserted after the first birth. When the couples have given birth a second time, we will persuade them to get sterilized. If we find an illegal pregnancy, we will persuade them to terminate it. If the persuasion is not successful, we will supplement with administrative measures (*xingzhen cuoshi*) for providing technical services. But in general, we prefer to adopt **persuasion** (she emphasized).

What did "administrative measure", "technical services" and "persuasion" mean? Was there anything obscured by the use of euphemisms and apparently innocuous abstractions of these terms? Interview the villagers, I found that the seemingly innocent expressions may disguise sinister intent. "Persuasion" denoted not only oral argument but official harassment, threats, and heavy fines. "Technical services" was a euphemism for birth control surgeries including IUD insertions, sterilization, and abortions. The phrase "administrative measures" was also standing for unspecified applications of bureaucratic power at the grassroots level.

According to the villagers, like other villages in other parts of China, the cadres in Xiaohuang also adopted coercion in birth control because they could not guarantee to fulfill the state policy. Although Ling tried to avoid mentioning the use of coercion in Ku Village, she told me if the couple with an unauthorized pregnancy or higher order birth did not pay the fine, they sometimes confiscated the property of those "illegal families", such as a TV, furniture, a bicycle and so on for substitution of a fine. But under normal circumstances, they were unwilling to choose such compulsory methods because it would hurt the human relationship between them and the villagers. But when the "high tides" of family planning (*jihua shengyu gaochao*)

came, under the pressure of government they had to commit to these kinds of coercive practices. Ling emphasized:

At ordinary times, it is impossible to employ coercive measures. How can we catch people based on our own effort? In "high tides", there is a cooperation between the different departments such as the *paichusuo* (local police station), the *fulian* (women's federation), hospitals and so on. The township government also sends a lot of people to the villages.

Ling repeatedly emphasized their measures of penalties were based on the policy of the government. Checking the document of the *Regulation of Family Planning in Guangdong Province*, I found there were different kinds of rewards for rural couples who followed family planning regulations, and there were different kinds of punishments to rural couples who broke the family planning regulation. Concerning the rural population, the Regulation clearly stated that:

Rural couples having a second birth not under the quota, without the permission (unplanned birth), and within a four year interval will be fined 500 to 1500 yuan; one having a third birth will be fined 5000 yuan; and one bearing more than three children will be doubly fined. Those purposely not following family planning will be additionally fined 500 yuan. In addition, illegal couples will not be allowed to work in a city, to work in rural enterprises, to change rural residence status to urban residence status (*nongzhuanfei*), and to benefit from public welfare services. Unauthorized children will not get the division of land, dividends of public funds and other benefits...

7.4. Guerrilla Warfare in Family Planning

What clearly marked the response of the villagers to birth control was a great deal of villagers defying the policy and having a son, especially if they were unlucky enough to have two daughters, or became pregnant soon after the birth of a first child. No matter how harsh the punishments were, there were at least ten "illegal households" that offended the regulation of family planning in Ku Village. I interviewed some of them. Through their stories, we can grasp how these villagers, who were labeled by the government as "*chao sheng you ji dui*" (guerrillas of excess birth), manipulated the "*youji zhanshu*" (guerrilla strategies) to resist unpopular state policy; and on the other hand, how the village cadres implemented the population policy at a local level.

Sister Fang's Story

Sister Fang was thirty-eight years old. She was married to a villager in Ku Village when she was twenty-three. Her husband's father had two wives. The first wife had borne him no children and she finally adopted a son. According to Sister Fang, this adopted son in fact did not support her old age. Although Fang's husband was the second wife's son, they supported their mother-in-law and treated her as a blood mother. Sister Fang had borne her husband three children. The first two were daughters and the third one was a son. She recalled her painful experience when she was bearing the unauthorized pregnancy,

After my second birth, Songsheng and Ling repeatedly visited my home and requested me to be sterilized. You know, we still didn't have a son, so how could I stop giving birth? So my husband and I refused to be sterilized. Songsheng threatened to fine us heavily. But we told her that even if they fined us, we wouldn't change our mind. When I bore the third child, I knew I couldn't stay in Ku Village any longer because through newspaper and radio, we knew that family planning was very tight (jihua shengyu gaocao). That was 1983.

One day, a villager ran to inform me that the cadres of the ADC were joining with officials of township government and were coming to the villages to catch up with unauthorized pregnant women. At the time, the team was in Datangbei Village. My husband and I were very scared. The villagers suggested that I escape. Because all of us knew that pregnant women caught by the cadres in the campaign (yun dong) had little chance of refusing an abortion as the women pregnant without permission would not be allowed to return to their families until they consented to carry out an abortion.

We couldn't escape by land as we would meet the cadres on the way. So I decided to escape by water. I remember that it was raining. I ran and ran along the river with fear. When I got to the Ershui Temple, the rain suddenly became heavy. I went into the temple. A monk came out and when he saw me, he knew that I was escaping the compulsory abortion. He was very kind and invited us into a room to seek shelter from the rain. He also got dry clothes for me to change into. He was a

really good man. I was so touched at that moment. Until now I still remember that monk. He also asked a man in the temple to carry my luggage and sent me off to my father's home. I fled from Ku Village and went into hiding for about 100 days until my baby was born. While I was staying at my father's village, I knew that there were three other fellow villagers hiding from family planning in the village.

After I gave the third birth and returned to village, the cadres came to collect the illegal birth fee. I refused to pay because our family was so poor. We really had no money to pay the fine, and I also knew that other villagers who had excessive births hadn't paid the fine. But in autumn of 1983, there was another high tide. About thirty or forty cadres came to the villages to collect the excess birth fee and other anti-family planning fees. Anyone who refused to pay the fine would have all their valuable things confiscated. When the team of cadres were taking action in the neighbouring village, a villager quickly ran to divulge the news to me. So we concealed all our valuable things in the house of our neighbours. I also hid myself in another villager's home. When the team came to Ku Village, it was late afternoon. One of the old villagers, Grand aunt Ba steamed many sweet potatoes for the cadres to delay the progress. She hoped that after the cadres finished the sweet potatoes, they would leave. But Grand aunt's plan failed. When the cadres came to my house, they couldn't find me. The rooms were also empty and there were only two beds left. My mother-in-law and my daughters all slept on the new bed. The cadres couldn't find any valuable things in the room and they finally confiscated my old bed.

I didn't want to get into any more trouble. I finally became sterilized and when I went to the hospital, I met one of the cadres who came to confiscate my furniture. She was a fellow villager from my father's village. My sister-in-law (my brother's wife) cursed her pungently: "Do you still want our things? You aren't a human being (*bushi ren*). You are one of us (*zijiren*). How can you treat the other villagers like that!"

My unauthorized son faced unfair treatment from the village committee. He got no division of land or the dividend of public funds. However, I know another household's unauthorized son obtained dividends from their village committee. I complained of their unfair treatment in a villagers' meeting and the fellow villagers

also support me since they thought twenty-yuan didn't much affect their dividend distribution. In the end, my son also got the dividend.

Lian's Sixth Birth.

Lian was about 38 years old. He was the youngest member in his family. His three brothers all had two sons. But his wife had borne him no son until the sixth birth. After her second birth, the village cadres came to mobilize them to sterilize. But Lian refused to do that. His wife fled from Ku Village and hid in her father's village in Hainan province to avoid compulsory abortion. After the baby was born, she returned to the village. Although the village cadres knew his wife had had an unauthorized birth, they did not force his wife to be sterilized. Lian also did not pay the fine. According to other villagers, it was because Lian had a good relationship with secretary Songsheng.

But in the tight year of family planning, no illegal birth households could escape punishment. In 1983, when the working team of family planning came to Ku Village, they also confiscated valuable things in Lian's house by force. Lian said that his clock, furniture and other property were seized by the family planning working team. When the team was still staying in Ku Village, Lian's wife took refuge with other members of Ku Village in their house because she was afraid that the cadres would catch up with her and force her to be sterilized.

Before Lian got a son, he did not build a new house because he thought that all his daughters would leave his village when they got married. After he got a son, he built a new house for his son. Now he has sent three daughters to his wife's family and left two girls living with him in Ku Village.

Brother Fu's Silence

Brother Fu, 32 years old, was actually not a member of Ku Village. He lived in Ku Village to look after his grandmother (his mother's mother). His grandmother had borne no sons and in her old age her daughter sent one of her sons to live with her

and support her. Fu had changed his domicile and taken his mother's surname to become a member of Ku Village.

Fu had an unauthorized third birth because his wife had borne him no sons during the first two births. They were lucky enough to have a son at the third birth. The same as other women in Ku Village, his wife had their son in her parents' house to escape the capture of compulsory abortion. Brother Fu kept silent when his wife was pregnant at the beginning and village cadres did not pay attention to her third birth because she had the son one-year after her last child. Returning to Ku Village, she left her second daughter with her mother. Now her son must be two years old. They had not yet paid any extra-birth fine at that moment, but they worried about having to pay it when his son entered school. They did not want to talk too much about their son. His wife just said "We have no other choice. Everyone is the same in rural society."

Brother Shao's Trouble

Shao was 40 years old. He got married in his late twenties. Shao also had an unauthorized third birth for the same reason as the other villagers. Now his son should be eight years old. This "illegal son" caused a lot of trouble in his family. Before his birth, the village cadres repeatedly visited Shao's home to require his wife to have an abortion. The cadres threatened to fine them heavily, but the material punishment could not eliminate Shao's desire to have a son since they had financial support from overseas relatives. To Shao, he was willing to pay fines in exchange for this third birth. According to Shao, he had paid about 3,500 *renminbi* for his son.

But paying fines did not mean nothing would happen again. One night, dozens of rural cadres surrounded their house and wanted to catch his wife for an abortion. His wife had escaped through the back door to take refuge with relatives. When the village cadres could not find his wife, they confiscated their TV, furniture, bicycle and other property by force. Now, after his son has entered primary school, the government continues to fine him via school. Shao's complaint will be presented in a later part of this work.

Wang's Painful Experience

Wang's experience of being forced to sterilize and fined by local government illustrates how the enforcing of birth control had been implemented in the village. Wang's first birth was a girl. According to villagers' interpretation in the regulation of government, the couple was permitted to bear a second birth after a four-year interval if their first child was a girl. However, Wang was pregnant soon after the birth of their first child. She was very scared and hid herself to avoid enforced abortion. When she returned home -- twelve days after the second birth -- the village cadres came to her house with officials of the *xiang* government. They asked her to pay the fine, but Wang and her husband did not have enough money to pay any fines. Then the cadres confiscated their bed, furniture and so on, and also destroyed their stove and kitchen range.

She was also captured by the cadres to be sterilized. In the hospital, she was also treated badly by the doctors. She told me that many people paid black money to doctors for better treatment. But she insistently refused to give any extra money to the hospital. She said, "It is not right for them to receive extra money because they are already paid regularly by the government." So the doctor deliberately deferred her treatment and she was kept in the hospital for 24 hours only because she did not pay such black money.

Village Head's Son

Xin was the son of the former village head, Uncle Leng. He was about 24 years old. Xin and his wife also broke the regulations of family planning early in their marriage (*zao hun*). According to the Marriage Law, the legal marrying age of females and male is 22 and 25 years old respectively. Thus, those who get married and give birth before the legal age will be fined. When Xin got marriage, he was only 22 years old and his wife was only 18 years old.

Xin met his wife, Xiu, in Shenzhen when he went to Shenzhen to visit his friend. Xiu was a working daughter (*dagongmei*) who came from Shaoguan. She worked in a foreign invested factory in Shenzhen. When Xin met her, they quickly fell in love and had a sexual relationship. Xiu soon became pregnant and she could

not stay in the factory any longer. Xin brought Xiu back to Ku Village without any formal certificate of marriage from the local government. In the same year, his wife had their first child. This child was a son and this son was given the urban household registry, the same as Xiu. Xin told me that he was not fined by the government and his wife was not forced to abortion or become sterilized. He told me frankly that money and personal relationships were the determining factors for his good fortune. He also said that his wife's household registry was not at Ku Village, so the local government did not want to deal with any extra tasks.

Before I left Ku Village, Xin's son was only two years old. I knew that his wife was pregnant for the second time. I knew that they had broken family planning regulation again. According to regulation, the couple was only permitted to bear a second child within a four-year interval if the first birth was daughter. But Xin did not seem to worry too much about this. In Ku Village, there was general recognition among the villagers and cadres that there was a de facto two-child policy in operation. The village couples who had only one child, no matter if it was a son or a daughter, all planned to have a second child.

Escaper from Jiangxi

One day when I was walking along the river, I saw a man I had never met before. After chatting with him, I knew that he was not from Ku Village. He escaped from Jiangxi province with his pregnant wife to avoid an enforced abortion and sterilization. He told me that after having two girls, the local government forced his wife to insert an intrauterine device (IUD). She removed the ring herself. But after his wife became pregnant, they knew that the local cadres would force his wife to have an abortion and then become sterilized. So they decided to leave Jiangxi and sought refuge from his sister in Ku Village. His sister was married to a villager in Ku Village. When they arrived in Ku Village, they got a lot of assistance from the villagers because they had had similar experiences too. They borrowed a room from Brother Hua, and Brother Kang also lent them a piece of land to plant watermelons. Nobody reported their situation to the village cadres of Xiaohuang district administrative committee. This man told me that he was just waiting for the birth of a son and did not have any plans at the moment.

These six stories illustrate how the enforcing of birth control was implemented by the village cadres and how the villagers resisted birth control in the village. The goal of the government's population policy seems not easy to achieve. In most rural areas like Ku Village, the fine had become the only method of penalty in birth control. The problem with an economic penalty is that if the villagers' economic power becomes strong, they can easily ignore the policy of birth control and pay no attention to the economic sanctions.⁷ On the other hand, cash seems to legitimize the unauthorized births of the villagers. Uncle Bi made fun of the policy and said:

The policy tells us that "best to have one, at most to have two, an unplanned birth will be fined". Ha! Ha! The government tells you that if you have money, you have more children.

Uncle Si also criticized the means of fine. He said:

Since the government states clearly that the third birth is not permitted, why can one have three or more children after paying the money? Just because our Communist party is so materialistic. If you have money, you can do anything.

Most scholars -- both Chinese and overseas -- have warned that when the fine cannot prevent the excess births of the villagers, the population of rural China will lose control (e.g. Croll, 1994; Greenhalgh, 1990). In short, paying the fines for exchanging a child has also become one of the most powerful weapons of the villagers to resist the population policy.

Absconding or escaping is also a significant strategy of the villagers to resist birth control. The village cadres cannot control the migration of villagers now because the villagers no longer need a certificate of permission from the village government for leaving their home village. In the above stories, we know that the unauthorized pregnant women often escaped compulsory sterilization and abortion measures by abandoning their home villages and taking refuge with relatives or friends in other places. When babies were born, they would return to their villages.

⁷ As Croll states (1994:190), "(e)conomic sanctions constituted less of a deterrent to peasant households, which had access to many resources not available to urban households. Food supplies, for instance, could be produced on their land allocations, housing was privately owned, and health and educational facilities were not as well developed as in urban areas, and local village governments were not in the same position to reward and penalize peasant households."

The villagers and the cadres labeled them an "unplanned birth guerrilla force" (*chaosheng tousheng youjidui*). Any resistance required the support and collusion of the village as a whole, so the success of an escape largely rested on the tacit and complicity among the villagers. In rural China, the villagers mostly share the cultural meaning of having a son. When villagers were hiding in other villages, local villagers complicitously kept silent. When the "high tide" of family planning came, some villagers even volunteered to hide pregnant women or valuable things for these illegal families.

Face to face cursing is another tactic the villagers used to fight against the birth control policy. The villagers soberly know that the implementation of the state policy basically depends on the performance of the local cadres. If they can prevent the local cadres from working hard in implementing the population policy, then they can easily have an "illegal son" without being punished by the government. For instance, in the early 80s, Secretary Songsheng implemented the policy harshly. The villagers bitterly hated her, so that they reviled her whenever they met her. The villagers told me that:

Songsheng had been damned to tears by the villagers. Having learned a lesson, she has become much more clever as she seldom carries out coercive practices on birth control. Now she has "one eye open, and one eye closed" (*zhi yan kai zhi yan bi*) in implementing the birth control policy.

In their cursing of the cadres, I found that they were capable of articulating the language of the Communist Party to defame the local cadres. For example, when they condemned the coercive confiscation and compulsory sterilization and abortion by the local cadres, they liked to describe the behaviour of village cadres as more abominable than that of the "*Guomindang*" (National Party) and "*tufei*" (bandits). I often heard their condemnation in their everyday conversation -- "They (local cadres) are fiercer than the *tufei*"; "*Guomindang* was kinder than them. They didn't treat their people like that"; "*Guomindang*'s officials weren't so barbarian" ... I think most of the people know that in the film and media produced by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), the CCP tried to create dirty images of the National Party and bandits. "National Party" and "bandits" became the signifier of evil-doers and bastards which were used to signify the "others". Although the CCP had the power to produce the

language, but they could not prevent how the people used that language. In de Certeau's words, "nobody can prevent the ordinary people from taking the production of meaning into their own hands" (de Certeau, 1984). Villagers in Ku Village made the official language their own and borrowed the categories constructed by the CCP to condemn the behaviour of their local cadres. Uncle Si often compared the communist local cadres with National Party's local officials:

Now there is no difference between the bandits (*tufei*) and local cadres. I experienced the period of Guomindang and New China (*Xin ZhongGuo*), Honestly, I think the discipline of Guomindang's officials is better than that of Gongchandang. At least the former would not bully the people like Gongchangdang's cadres.

I think the officials of National Party are not necessarily as good as the villagers described. In this sense "National Party" has become a symbol of signifying which anybody can adopt to represent something for their own purpose.

The villagers are also capable of constructing their own story to de-legitimize the state policy. In Ku Village, in everyday chatting, a story often became a rumour which quickly swept through the village. Again, nobody knew who the story creators or the rumour makers are. Everyone could be and nobody would need to be a responsibility taker. In Ku Village, for legitimizing their resistance and de-legitimizing the population policy and control, the villagers had constructed a story about the disagreement between Deng Xiao-ping and Ye Jian-ying's in making the population policy. Ye was an influential leader in Mao and Deng's era. He was also very important after Mao's death because he made "the Gang of Four" (*siren bang*) out of power and helped Deng come to power. Ye Jian-ying was also a Hakka. Hakka people were proud of Ye and looked up to him as the "great man" or "hero" of the Hakka people. I repeatedly heard:

People said Marshal Ye didn't agree to carrying out the birth control policy. Marshal Ye thought it couldn't work in Chinese society. On this issue, there was a big gap between Deng Xiaoping and Marshal Ye. When the policy was finally carried out, Marshal Ye was very angry and said "I will not take any responsibility for this policy."

I think this story was not necessarily true, but the villagers' imagination and creation was indeed a discursive practice in everyday life. They tried to articulate their fellow villager and important leader Marshal Ye as part of their political jargon for

legitimizing their resistance to create their own framework of argument in fighting against the population policy.

7.5 New Means of Control, New Conflict Created

The everyday resistance and guerrilla strategies of the villagers made the population policy difficult to implement. It is often said that of all the policies implemented by the government in the reform period, it is birth control policies that are not only the most unpopular of policies but also constitute the only "hard" policy in a village (Liu, 1996; Croll, 1994). When I interviewed the village cadres, they often complained about the difficulty of executing the birth control policy. Ling told me the fine was difficult to collect, and the unplanned birth was also difficult to discover.

If they [unplanned birth guerrillas] hide in other villages or other places, you are unable to catch them. We have much more work to do. It is impossible to keep watch on them every day...

Sometimes, when they know that we have discovered their unauthorized pregnancies, they move away all the expensive things from their house. So we can take nothing from their house.

Having a group interview with the village cadres in Songsheng's house, the village cadres aired their grievance and powerlessness in the task of birth control. Secretary Songsheng repeatedly complained that family planning was an unpopular program.

This [family planning] is a hard and thankless task. It often hurts the personal relationship (*guanxi*) between us and the villagers. Nobody [the upper government and villagers] can understand the difficulties of the task at the local level. If we cannot fulfill the task, we have to pay a cash penalty from our own income. Who wants to take this difficult and unpleasant work?

She continued to blame the backwardness of the ideology of the "petty peasants economy" with the official language.

They are really stubborn and conservative. Whatever we told them, they could not change their mind. Our government had told us that the population policy was for the sake of long-term national interest. Their petty peasant ideology just made them consider selfish short-term family interest. I don't think it is easy to change their bad reproductive habits.

The "cadres' job responsibility system" had also been introduced in the implementation of population policy. The village cadres had to sign a contract with the higher level government in order to guarantee the fulfillment of the target or quota of family planning. If the village cadres at different levels could not fulfill the target, they would be punished.

To escape punishment from the upper government, the village cadres adopted strategies of under-reporting and mis-reporting most of the time. Because every village had their quotas of birth every year, if the village could not fully use their quotas in this year, the village cadres still reported that they had used the quotas and kept the quotas for the year of excess birth in the village. From the data of birth reported by the village cadres, it was difficult for the upper government to find out the number of excess births in a village. Avoiding violent clashes with the villagers, the village cadres often learned to keep "one eye opened and one eye closed". Especially to the pregnant women who came from other villages; the village cadres feigned they "didn't know" and did not take up the cases.

Confronting the resistance of the villagers and the collusion of the village cadres, the local government tried to search for some new means of birth control. Education was one of the "significant" means to punish "illegal families". But this new control aroused new problems.

There was a bustling scene in Songxi Primary School inasmuch as it was the day of student registration. The parents of students came to school to pay school fees and collect books for their children. The principal, Uncle Xiang, and teachers collected the fees and gave the books to the parents as usual. As the villagers and the teachers knew each another well, after paying, the villagers often stayed and chatted with the teachers. So there were many people gathering in the school. However, the sensitive villagers would find that day was somewhat different because the party secretary, Songsheng, and another unfamiliar man appeared in the school office. They kept watch on the people coming in to pay the fee, like "watchdogs" in the villager's words.

Brother Jun did not feel at ease when he met Songsheng in the office. He wondered why Songsheng appeared in the school's office at this time. He asked Uncle Xiang eagerly, "What is she doing here?" Uncle Xiang secretly told him, "Look! That

fat man comes from the township government. Songsheng and he came to collect extra birth fees. They ordered us if anyone refuses to be fined, we would not be allowed to give the books to the students who are the extra children in their family." When they were talking, Songsheng came to them and talked to Jun with smile, "Jun, I am sorry that your son is an unauthorized birth. According to the government policy, you have to pay a fine of 1,500 yuan." Jun replied immediately, "I have no money." Songsheng kept on talking with a smile, "Don't worry, our government has taken care of those who have difficulty in paying the lump sum. Now we will allow you to pay 200 yuan every term until you have been fined 1,500 in full." Jun questioned, "What kind of policy is this?" Songsheng threatened him, "If you don't pay the fee, the school won't distribute the books to your son and he won't be allowed to go to school anymore." Jun replied to Songsheng angrily, "Secretary, I warn you not to take away my son's school bag. Don't forget you also have a grandchild attending school. If you dare take away my son's school bag, how can't I allow the same thing to happen with your grandchild? My son can't go to school, neither can your grandchild. Doesn't our government offer nine years of free education to our children? Why can't my son go to school?" The fat official from the township came to Jun and said, "Don't be so fierce. There's nothing that can't be discussed. Could you please consider our difficulties? I'm also from Xiaohuang. We are uncle and brother. I don't want to hurt the guanxi between an uncle and a brother. OK, don't say that I'm getting the fine from you, but begging from you? All right?" Jun calmed down and said, "OK, OK, I will pay the fee. But I have paid 100 yuan already." The fat official said happily, "You can pay 100 yuan this time." Jun paid 100 yuan and left.

Near mid-day, more and more people came to pay the school fee. Suddenly, an old man from another village loudly swore at Songsheng, "You plainly bullied me! If you want my life, I have one. Money! I have none!" Songsheng screeched with arms akimbo, "This is government policy. You dare to refuse to? You must know your grandson is an illegal birth!" The old man continued to swear loudly. Suddenly he drew his sword and threatened her, "Who dares to take my money, I will kill her." The township official and Songsheng were very scared and quickly ran away. Uncle Xiang and some villagers came out to stop him from hurting the cadres; some just discussed among themselves in a low voice; some just watched the scene of quarrel. Then, the old man turned to the teachers and Uncle Xiang and gave a warning, "The

person who dare to move my grandson out of his classroom, I will make trouble for." Teacher Ying replied, *"We are not stupid. This thing is only done by the foolish cadres. We will not choose to make things difficult for ourselves."* In the end, the old man only paid the school fee and also got books for his grandson.

According to the villagers, this old man lived in another village near Ku Village. He had been an officer of Guomindang's army. In his house, there were different sorts of swords. His son had three daughters, but refused to let his wife be sterilized until he got a son. He also refused to pay the fine and often threatened the life of any official who dared to fine them. Everyone knew that he was an old man with a violent temper. So the cadres did not dare to collect the illegal birth fine from his family.

Collecting extra birth fees via school aroused the discontent of the villagers. In their everyday conversations, I found they were very dissatisfied with the new means of birth control of the Chinese government. One afternoon, in Uncle Xiang's house, some villagers were talking about the quarrel that had happened in Songxi school. In the following conversation, we can hear some different voices from the villagers.

When I met Uncle Xiang, he began complaining about the township government shifting the burden of exercising birth control to schools. He said, "Who says there is no new thing under the sun. Our Communist Party creates new devices everyday. Ha! They order us to collect extra birth fees for them. How strange it is! School is opened for education, not for birth control. It is unreasonable to shift the burden to us. It will not only worsen the relationship between the schools and the masses, but also influence the progress of our teaching." I asked, "How about the response of the teachers?" Uncle Xiang, "Basically, the teachers sympathize with the situation of the students. We really understand why they want to have a son. But you know, the teachers and I are very powerless when the parents came to quarrel with us... They also asked us to collect the fee from those who didn't fulfill the compulsory grain. We don't understand why we have to taken so many duties of the government. Basically, it isn't our business."

When we were chatting, Uncle Si and Jun came in. They joined our conversation. They questioned whether the policy of collecting the illegal birth fee in

school was authorized by the higher level government. Uncle Si always believed that many policies were commanded by the township government, but not by the central government. He said, "Don't believe them. They can only cheat the dead (*pian si ren*). The local policy (*tu zheng ce*) is made of the Songnan Commune (Songnan Township)." Jun agreed with him, "Right! I saw the document held in Songsheng's hand. It was printed by Songnan township." I asked, "Why didn't you directly question Songsheng?" Uncle Xiang said, "My nephew, it is useless. They of course can tell you the central government allows them to make the policy according to the local situation. 'According to the local situation' becomes their shield." Uncle Si then sighed, "The Communist Party is so astute!"

Brother Li came out from the room. He interposed into our conversation, "Uncle Xiang, people said that Songkou Secondary School didn't collect extra-birth fees from illegal families. Is it true?" Jun said, "As I know, there is no extra-birth fee collection in Dahuang district. Only the cadres of Xiaohuang act like 'pig bellies' (that means the cadres strictly implemented the state policy as good executors without taking villagers' interest into account)." Aunt Si said to Jun, "They (village cadres) can successfully collect the fee from you only because you are too well-behaved and not as united as Dahuang's people. If you have a consensus of refusing payment collectively, how can they force you to do so?"

This kind of story often happens in Chinese rural areas. The enforcing of birth control in rural China has become the new conflict between the state and peasants. And it has also become the most difficult task that rural cadres face. In recent years, the rural cadres find it more and more difficult to control the birth of villagers and fine illegal births. The government tries to find new control mechanisms to tackle with new problems. Education has become one of the control mechanisms of birth control in recent years. But the new control mechanisms only created a new conflict between the local government and the villagers.

7.6. Conclusion

The politics of birth control has become a main line of recent inquiry of peasant politics in reform era of China. The struggle between the state, local cadres,

women and the family has been maintained for about two decades. It is a specific historical phenomena caused by economic reform which have fallen under the ideology of modernization. In mainland China, maybe not just China, reflexivity about the politics of demographic praxis is notably lacking. The central problematique is that the demographic theories of fertility change which the government and academics adopted is formulated in terms of modernization theory's evolutionary view of societal development. As Greenhalgh and other scholars criticized, in this ahistorical view, society and history are seen as moving in a unilinear, predetermined fashion and "History" can be collapsed into traditional and modern phases. The pattern of western fertility transition is also tautologically symbolized as the cause and effect of economic development (Greenhalgh, 1996:27). To achieve the goal of economic development or modernization, family planning and birth control legitimately become necessary. Dipping into the official demographic discourse, we are not uneasy to discover the similar voice in which birth control was naturalized as part of effort to achieve the goal of Four Modernization or Deng's designation of a socialist market economy.

To go beyond the hegemonic discourse on family planning, this chapter aims to discover the neglected voice of the local people and understand the cultural meaning of having a son in the rural socioeconomic context of China which shapes their views and practices of reproduction. "Son" to the villagers, no matter male or female, in the short term represents survival, prosperity and old age security; in the long term, males represent the continuity of family line, their moral obligation to their ancestors and lineage, and the security in the next life. The population policy of the Chinese government launched in the 1980s, intended to reshape the meaning of reproduction, has greatly threatened the fulfillment of the villagers' dream. Villagers in Ku Village have fought and continuously prepared to fight for a son at any cost.

Similar to other aspects, they employ the everyday forms of tactics to resist birth control, especially if they have been unlucky enough to have two daughters or have a son soon after the birth of a first child. They ran away, they hid in near and distant villages, they evaded capture, they evaded fines, or they concealed their valuables in the houses of their neighbours; all of which have made the family planning policy existing in name as well as demolishing in practices. Any resistance

required the support and collusion of the village as a whole and their collective resistance was defended in a shared understanding -- having a son is legitimate. In other words, their tacit complicity in resistance have also made the government's target of population policy difficult to achieve. Not only have they fought against the policy in action, but in everyday conversation the villagers have also formulated their framework of argument which has centered on a simple equation -- support for the government's birth control policies to be matched by its obligation to provide care for the elderly. They time and again stated that they could not understand why the government did not allow them to have a son when it did nothing to support the elderly. Thus in their mind there was a direct relationship between old age support and birth control. However, in the reform era, the government's withdrawal of its *zeren* of eldercare provision has further made the villagers passionately desire to have a son. The birth control policy feared the villagers and increased their sense of insecurity because the pitiful life of the elderly without sons in the village had shown them examples. In short, the elderly without sons had to depend on themselves and not depend on the government was, in the eyes of the villagers, a break in the social contract between government and people and therefore entirely legitimized resistance to birth control policies.⁸

The village cadres at the local level find it very difficult to implement the population policy. Lacking in reliable and institutionalized means to ensure the policy implementation, they are not willing to turn to coercion at ordinary time because coercion will hurt the relationship between the village cadres and the villagers. Out of self-interest, the village cadres often passively cooperate with the villagers and also use their own strategies to fulfill their task. However, in the case of birth control, in contrast to taxation, we can find the village cadres occasionally turn to coercion in the "mobilization" of family planning because they can get the support of different departments of upper government. In short, coercion cannot oppress the villagers' desire of having a son and the political propaganda do not guarantee a corresponding practice by people themselves. The villagers on the ground have created meaning

⁸ . I cannot say that the villagers would really accept the birth control policy after the government had provided the old-age care services. But I can say "old-age support" is one the important reason the villagers adopted to justify their resistance.

and participate in the production of moral desires influenced by their own culture(s), which is different from that articulated by the government and dominant academics.



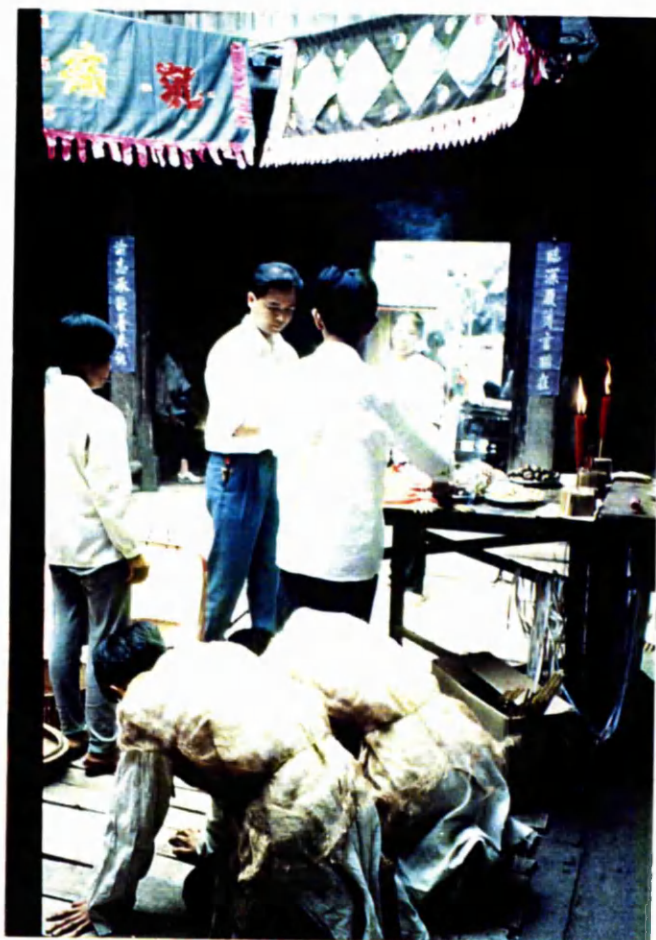
7.1. slogan of family planning I



7.2. slogan of family planning II



7.3. the elder's home in Songnan town



7.4. mourning hall



7.5. performing the ritual of religion



7.6. people joining the funeral

Chapter 8: Sidelining Government -- Legitimacy Crisis, Grassroots Democracy, and the Revival of Traditional Organization

One day, Secretary Song-sheng came to see me for the first time. She took out two pieces of paper and showed me the purpose of her visit. That piece of paper was a letter written to an overseas relative, which was entitled "Xiaohuang cunmin zhi haiwai xiangxian shu" (letter to the overseas villagers from Xiaohuang villagers). Songsheng asked me to mobilize the other overseas villagers to fund the building of the ADC office. She was preparing many copies of this letter and would be sending them to the overseas villagers. Songsheng told me, "Hok-bin, you are also Xiaohuang ren (Xiaohuang's people). You also wish that Xiaohuang would become better. You know, we don't have any permanent office and when we want to handle official affairs (bangong) and deal with routine matters for the villagers, we really don't have anywhere to go. We shouldn't always occupy Yueshun's house as our conference room. It is quite inconvenient because his family members are also there. In addition, we really don't want to lose the Xiaohuang people's face. As I know, the neighbouring villages often make fun of Xiaohuang behind our back. They say there are so many overseas relatives, but no one can afford to build an office building. I think if we can build a modern office building, nobody will dare look down us." I really didn't know how to respond and only told Songsheng "I would try my best."

Three days later, there was an overseas villager, Uncle Zhun who had returned to Ku Village from Indonesia. As I know, Songsheng also went to see him and asked him to financially support the building of the ADC office. Not only party Secretary Songsheng, the representatives from different organizations of the village also went to see Uncle Zhun to ask for financial support. The school principal, Uncle Xiang asked him to support the education fund (jiaoyu jijin). The representative of the home for the elderly asked for a donation. The accountant of the ancestral hall committee, Uncle Wen, also asked for a donation for the normal expenditures of the ancestral hall. He also proposed the idea the construction of a menlou (village gate) to Uncle Zhun.

I consulted Uncle Si and Uncle Wen about Songsheng's idea of raising funds from overseas villagers for building the ADC office. Both of them told me "just ignore her nonsensical idea"; "don't believe her guizhuyi (wicked ideas)". Uncle Si even said, "She is building a pack of lie. Why do we need such a modern office building? It's benefit means nothing for us. I doubt she is making money for her own pockets." Uncle Si also told me that it was often reported by the mass media that the local cadres embezzled public fund in the name of fund raising (jizi).

* * * *

In Ku Village, the local government at village level had gradually lost their trust and respect from the villagers since the rural reform. It was because the local government did not function properly after the rural economic reform and the reconstruction of the rural administrative organization. As I presented in prior chapters, the village committee and the ADC cannot intervene into the production and control the life chance of village households nowadays; they also cannot function to provide any social welfare to the villagers. To the villagers, the local government was just the one who had extracted their interest and destroyed their reproduction of family by hook and by crook.

To the village cadres, they knew that they had been losing their authority -- no respect from the villager, no economic power, and no loyalty and support from the villagers. However they were not passive actors either. They also actively tried to rebuild their prestige using different strategies. Constructing a "modern" office building was one of the ways. In the eyes of the village cadres, the office building symbolized the power of the local government and its extension, meanwhile the style of the building; for example, how many stories, what kind of decoration, signified the economic power of the village committee. To Songsheng, economic power was a determinate factor to maintain their authority. The villager cadres believed that the village cadres in PRD became powerful because "they had money." Lacking any rural enterprise and industry, overseas relatives became the source of financial income and support. Thus, the village cadres actively competed for funds from overseas.

The Communist government was also aware of the low prestige of local cadres had influenced the policy implementation. Thus, it began to carry out the so called 'grassroots democracy' in the mid-80s for the sake of maintaining the legitimacy of its representatives in local society. The Communist government declared that the idea was for the reason of enhancing the consciousness of democracy among the Chinese peasants and promoting the rural economy. The central government believed that the leader selected by the villagers themselves would be more responsive to local economic needs because the villagers have a much better notion of village talent than the higher authorities in theory. However, it is often reported that there were some serious violent clashes between the cadres and villagers in the village election (South China Morning Post, April 21, 1997; Xu, 1997; Wang, 1997; He, 1997). Facing unpublished election results, interference of the upper government, and other fraudulent elections and practices, Chinese peasants no longer endured the fraudulent behaviour of local government and village cadres. Some angry locals beat up the officials and elected cadres; some were able to organize themselves to collective petition and demonstrate against unfair results; and some appealed to the upper government or central government via legal procedures based on the Law of Organization of Village Committees.

However, as James Scott predicted (1989), the direct clash and organized demonstration was often met with heavily armed policemen because such overt resistance called attention to these locals. For instance, on April 11, 1997, villagers in Wuyun, a mountain town 325 kilometers east of Guangdong, carried out demonstrations against unpublished election results. In the end, the dispute turned to violent and armed officers were sent to restore order, and at least 100 people were arrested. In this sense, locals in Ku Village seem to be wise and clever. They adopted somewhat different tactic to resist the unfair elections, what I called "sidelining local government". This tactic can be classified as the everyday form resistance which avoids direct confrontation with the government, but can fulfill their own interest in a safe way. This chapter aims to reflect on how the villagers practiced this tactic.

8.1. Playing the Voting Game in Ku Village

A turning point in the relationship between the government and village was the village election. In 1987, a law was passed by the central government, which formally allowed villages to elect their own headmen and committee. According to the constitution, the democratically elected villagers' committee has been constitutionally and legislatively mandated. One of the goals of local elections was to enhance grassroots democratic practices in official wording. The idea was also that these new forms of government would be more responsive to local economic needs. The advent of village democracy in China sounds impressive to western audiences. It was widely reported that

There are around 900,000 villages in China, housing perhaps three-quarters of the country's 1.3 billion people. Since 1988, over 80% of these villages have elected, through universal suffrage and secret ballots, their own chiefs and village committees, who serve for them of three years. By next year, 95% of villages will have held elections... For China as a whole, it marks the party's most sweeping abdication of power since the People's Republic was founded in 1949 (Economist, November 2, 1996).

It was also highlighted by western reporters that the local election was the victory of peasant power in China (The Independent, 1997).

However, available evidence of my case and other cases reported by others indicated that there was a disjuncture between the Communist government's intention and the actual practice of grassroots democracy (He, 1997; Xu, 1997; Wang, 1997). The villagers in Ku Village were not enthusiastic in carrying out elections according to the constitution. The former brigade leader, Uncle Bi, told me that the village election was held one time after the law was passed down. He explained the stipulation of the constitution to me in detail.

There are five cadres in the ADC. They are party secretary, district head, accountant, women representative and public security officer. Among these five people, the party secretary is only elected by the party members in the villages. The other cadres are elected by representatives of individual households. In the villagers' committee, there are two cadres. One is a village head and the other is the accountant. These two cadres are also elected by representatives of individual households. The election of an administrative district is

carried out every 3-5 years, and the election of villagers' committee is carried out every 2-3 years ...

But he also said,

But you know, it is quite common that locals take a negligent attitude toward state policy. When the policy is transmitted to locals, the locals often fulfill the requirement of the state at first time because the policy is tightly implemented by the government of a higher level at first. Afterward, the situation of the state is often ignored by the locality as the control of government is loosened.

In Ku Village, the election was not seriously carried out by the cadres because they told me that there were very few people willing to become village cadres. Those current cadres often complained about their heavy workload and their low salary in front of me. Party Secretary Songsheng often told me that if the government allowed her to resign, she really did not want to be village cadres any longer. Because there was little benefit to be gained from the position, there was no keen competition between the villagers for the position as the village head. Therefore, after some cadres resigned, local government had to try very hard to persuade someone to fill the vacancy. That means some of the new cadres were directly appointed by the local government.¹ The situation in Ku Village is quite different from those wealthy villages in which the villages' committee controls much of public property such as enterprises, and lands for commercial purpose and resources. So in wealthy regions like the Pearl River Delta, there is keen competition in a village head election. It was reported that clashes often occurred in such villages (South China Morning Post, April 21, 1997).

Although most of the villagers in Ku Village seemed to be not interested in the competition for the positions in the ADC and villagers' committee, they still paid attention to whom would become their head and how this came about. They did not mind the cadres appointed by the local government. But they were discontented with the local government appointing those village cadres who did not serve the interests of the village, but their own self-interest. As I have presented in the last several

¹. According to Oi (1992) and Nee (1989, 1991 & 1992), the village cadres were still powerful in those villages which had developed rural industry and enterprises, village and township industries. So after the grassroots democracy was carried out, many people competed for these advantageous positions which allowed them to maximize benefit from both the public and private sectors of a mixed socialist economy.

chapters, the villagers were dissatisfied with Songsheng's appointment of Uncle Leng and Dongtou who were not seen as qualified people in the position of village head. The villagers knew that they were powerless to change the mind of the local government even though they disliked these persons. In the village, *mianzi* (face or social honor) and *ganqing* (warmth) were still the important things they had to maintained. They never came out and objected to someone they disliked in public because it would damage the face and social honour of another villagers (*si po lianpi*). Thus, in the end they only chose to be uncooperative as a way of passive resistance at village elections.

The democratization in some countryside of China like that of Ku Village began in piece-meal fashion. However, it was being pushed hard again by central authorities in the early 1990s. It was reported that the provinces which lagged behind politically, such as Guangdong, Hainan and Guangxi in the south, were getting a tongue-lashing from Beijing. The villages which did not carry out election were required to rehold their village election again (Economist, November 2, 1996).

In March of 1995, the village election was reheld in Ku Village. One day, I found three large fresh red notices posted up by the ADC (see Picture 8.1). Looking closely, I realized that one of the red papers contained a list of the candidates to represent the people's congress at the county level. In this paper, all the candidates were the cadres of the ADC - Songsheng, Fashun, Yueshun, Liuzhu, and Wuqiang. The other two were the name list of voters. But the villagers were not interested in participating in the campaigning of elections. When I asked them about the election, they reacted very coldly, as cynicism had overtaken the villagers:

The game of Gongchandang can only cheat the dead.

Whomever we choose are all the ones they preferred. Whomever wins the election is decided by themselves. It makes no different.

Hok-Bin, don't be so serious. They are just acting.

We don't care whether the leaders were elected via democratic procedures or not, we only care who can do something for the village and protect our interest.

At the day of election, those villagers eligible to vote were asked to cast their votes into the ballot box in Songxi Primary School, polling station of the election.

Each voter got a ballot paper two weeks before the election. Today they had to make choice and they could vote for two candidates on each ballot paper. Two red banners reading "*toupiao si mei yige gongmin yingyou de yiwu he quanli*" (voting is the obligation and right of every citizen) and "*xuanju ziji de renda daibiao*" (elect your own representative of the people's congress) were sharply hung on the building of the school.

In the morning, the candidates and the cadres who came from the township government stood by and awaited for the voters in school. When the voters came in, the candidates kept smiling to welcome them. But until about eleven o'clock only few villagers came to vote. So the township cadres asked the candidates and the village cadres from different villages to mobilize the villagers in person. When Songsheng and Wen-ming came to Ku Village to invite the villagers to vote, the villagers were absent and excused themselves by saying "*shi fen mang*" (being very busy). When the township cadres found it difficult to mobilize the villagers, they finally decided to collect the ballot papers household by household.

Songsheng and Wenming came to Yuqing House to invite villagers to vote. When they saw Uncle Si, Songsheng asked, "Brother Si, have you voted?" Uncle Si coldly said, "Not yet." Songsheng said, "According to state policy, it's your right to choose your representative." Uncle Si replied, "Really? But then I can choose no one, can't I?" Wenming kept silent and listened to their conversation. Songsheng kept her smile and said, "Come on, brother, please give me a favour." Uncle Si said, "I lost my ballot. Could you give me another one?" Wenming passed a ballot to Uncle Si. Uncle Si wrote down something on the paper and put it in the box.

Uncle Xiang's wife prepared to go out. Songsheng and Wenming saw her and stopped her. They asked her to vote. Xiang's wife tried to find an excuse to decline Songsheng's request, "On! I am so stupid. I don't know how to use the ballot." Songsheng said, "Don't worry. We will tell you how to use it. It's quite simple." Xiang's wife unwillingly came to her room and took out the ballot. Songsheng pointed to the ballot and said, "You only need to write down the one you want to select." Xiang's wife said, "I'm illiterate. I don't know how to write." Wenming came out to solve out the problem. He said, "Sister, I will do for you. You only tell me which one you prefer." To avoid the award situation, Wenming turned to Songsheng,

"Secretary, you go to collect the other ballots first. Then I'll come to join you." After Songsheng left, Xiang's wife made her decision...

This was not an easy task for the village cadres, especially for those candidates, because not every villager was willing to cooperate. After collecting the ballot papers from each household, the cadres put all the ballots together in the school hall. The school teachers and the village cadres were invited to scrutinize the balloting process. Then they counted the ballot papers openly. In the end, Yueshun and Fashun were the winners in this election. Yueshun obtained most of the support from the villagers. However, several days after the election, rumor spread again in Ku Village. The villagers told me that eventually Songsheng replaced Fashun as one of the winners.² "Is it possible to change the result of election like that?" I asked one villager who was suspicious. "Why not? *Gongchandang* only choose the one they prefer. Of course, they can change the numbers of the ballot paper each candidate got." Some villagers even made jokes about this election,

Democracy? I never heard democracy like that. That's democracy with the characteristic of socialism.

I did not know whether what the villagers said was true or not. But one thing I could say was that their rumour and criticism about the black box operation of the local election really had eroded the legitimacy of this election. It was this single act which conclusively undermined the trust between the villagers and "the bad local cadres" and the legitimacy of the township government in the eye of villagers. To the villagers, it was the township government's *zeren* to guarantee a fair election. However, the result disappointed the villagers again. Songsheng was the target of criticism in this event. They created rumours about this election only for the sake of delegitimizing Songsheng, but not Yueshun.

The paralysis of local organization at the village level and the losing of legitimacy of the village cadres made the socialist state difficult to intervene into village affairs. Any hopes or remaining expectations that contractual obligations between local government and villagers would be honoured in the future were set aside. As a consequence, villagers turned to think that they had to rely on their own

² · In Ku Village, people seldom mentioned about Fashun. As I know, he takes charge the economic management of Xiaohuang ADC.

efforts (*kao zi ji*) to reconstruct their homeland. They sidelined the village government by establishing their own village organization based on kin elders and village lineage. They began to reorganize themselves cooperatively based on cultural and religious practices as well as public utilities like road paving, irrigation programs and so on. In the process of reorganizing themselves, the Ku identity was made through the cultural and religious practices. They identified with their common ancestors and their own local deities governed by senses of reciprocity, warmth or filial duty. The social boundary of the village was also redefined. In the process of reviving the traditional organization, the social hierarchy re-merged and there were some families growing into powerful groups whose members demonstrated patrilineal descent from a common ancestor. At the end of the day, there were elderly and wealthy kinsmen coming out to hold the collective activities.

8.2. Rebuilding Their Protective God

The villagers had already turned to the protection of local gods in their initial bid for prosperity and blessings, at first alongside, but increasingly in lieu of the local government. Several temples for local gods had been rebuilt or refurbished and a renewed mutual or reciprocal relationships of *zeren* was established between local deities in which blessings and offerings were exchanged for assistance and protection. To understand the significance and cultural meanings of the revival of traditional religious activities in the village politics, I "stubbornly" believe that we have to return to the everyday life of the villagers. Through their voices and activities in daily life, I will try to make sense of the relationship between the revival of local tradition and the formation of village identity, and the implication of the formation of village identity in the local politics of rural China.

Everyday Talk of Gods

Staying in Ku Village, one of the important topic in everyday chatting was about the stories and miracles of the local deities such as *Guanyin*, God of Mountain (*Gongwang*), and God of Rivers (*Hekou bogong*). To the villagers, these gods belonged to Ku Village, in other words, they protected the interests of Ku Village.

One day when I was walking with Uncle Si to Shanping Village, he told me about the miracle of the god of mountains. The story happened in the civil war between *Guomindang* and *Gongchandang*. One day there was a fierce fight between *Guomindang's* army and the *Gongchandang's* guerrilla forces. The guerrilla forces were defeated by *Guomindang's* army and retreated to the mountainous area in Ku Village. The *Guomindang's* army came to Ku Village to pursue the guerrillas. The military officer of *Guomindang* rode a horse ahead and led the army to the Ku Village. When he came to village's entrance, the horse suddenly stopped. No matter how he whipped the horse, it did not go forward. The officer found the shrine of *Gongwang* located beside the road, and thus he thought it was *Gongwang* that had made its presence known to the horse. Therefore, the officer withdrew his army and Ku Village escaped the disaster of war by a hairs breadth. This story was transmitted from generation to generation, and the villagers worshipped the *Gongwang* at every important festivals. For instance, every year, when it came to the birthday of *Gongwang*, almost all households participated in the celebration of *Gongwang's* birthday with enthusiasm. The villagers carried rich sacrifices to worship *Gongwang*. They also worshipped *Gongwang* during Chinese New Year and other important Chinese festivals. To the Kus, *Gongwang* was very efficacious. He was one of the local gods who would protect Ku Village's safety.

Guanyin was another god they often talked about. I remember the first time I met Aunt Tong, an old woman in Ku Village, the first thing she told me was about the accuracy of prediction of *Guanyin*. She told me, "This *Guanyin* is very efficacious. You are a very nice guy. You have to worship *Guanyin*. She will bless you." The villagers told me that they prayed to her when they had any problems with sickness, marriage, birth and so on which they not solve themselves, they would go to worship *Guanyin* and ask for blessings. To them, *Guanyin* was the god who answered all requests (*youqiu biying*). Each year, on the first day of the Lunar Chinese New Year, the old women from different households would go to worship her by offering abundant sacrifices and pray for blessings. They also asked for good fortune in coming years by drawing the bamboo ships for divination. In 1993, there was something happening in Ku Village in which the villagers once again affirmed that Ku Village's *Guanyin* was very efficacious.

One day in the late afternoon, a scream was pitched into the glow of the setting sun. The villagers recognized that was Brother San's cry and chased the direction of the voice because they knew something was wrong. The news quickly spread out to all corners of Ku Village. All the villagers came out to see what had happened. When they found him on the slope behind the Guanyin temple, he was in a state of unconsciousness because he had suffered a severe head injury. This accident made the villagers carry on endless discussion. Some believed Brother San was hurt because he had offended Guanyin. He was going to cut down a huge pine tree behind the Guanyin temple. The tree fell down and hurt his head. Some villagers believed that Brother San was still alive because the blessing of Guanyin niangniang. They said Brother San's mother was a devout follower of Guanyin and she worshipped Guanyin niangniang in every important festival. So Guanyin niangniang blessed her son. No matter if it was punishment or blessing, they believed Ku Village's Guanyin was very efficacious.

In Mao's period, the traditional religious activities were criticized as 'superstition' and a "residue of feudalism". They were banned and the temples were destroyed. The Communist government also intended to replace all the functions of traditional institutions by the commune system which tried to take care of every aspect of livelihood of peasants. Evidence showed us that the attempt at the total replacement of traditional organization was a failure because the villagers were still strongly attached to the family, household, kin and other religious organizations. Scholars found that in Deng's era there was a rapid revival of local cult in South China (e.g. Siu, 1990; Dean, 1993; Feuchtwang, 1992). But the revivals of traditional organization and religious ritual is not something natural as the view of mechanical historicism; rather, people reconstruct the traditional rituals in a new meanings, which respond to the new politico-economy in a reform era.

The dismantling of the collective and the disfunctions of the village committee led the villagers in some sense still missed Mao's period and sprouted out nostalgia. In comparison, to them, no matter how harsh their lives were, the collective still could provide the basic survival needs and services for them such as health services, basic

grains and education. But after the rural reform of 1979, the villagers lost their sense of security and source of dependence. They had to struggle for their livelihood with their own effort. The state policy such as taxation and birth policy further threatened their survival and reproduction of family; meanwhile, the market economy also increased their uncertainty. Thus the villagers turned to the protection of local gods in their initial bid for prosperity and blessing. In our daily conversation, the villagers revealed their nostalgia. One day in October of 1995, I joined the chitchat with the villagers after lunch. The villagers' topic was about the production and the price of pomelo because it was the season of harvest. But they seemed to be worried about their production. It was continuously raining in these days, which would seriously affect the production of pomelo. Uncle Guang stated with a heavy heart,

Ai! The rain will really kill our production. If it continues, we really will have a hard time in the coming year. In the Maoist past, the collective would take care of our basic needs, but now, we totally rely on ourselves. Whether we will have rice or congee depends on Heaven (*chifan chizhou kan tian le*).

The local gods provided the feelings of security for the villages. When they found something could not be solved by themselves, they would go to the deities and search for blessings. When the family members were sick, they would ask for healing from the local deities. In the villagers' prayers, they also asked for "good weather for the crops" (*fengtiao yushun*), as well as wishing the gods to send them a son. In 1993's Lunar New Year, I visited the village and joined their worship to *Guanyin* on the first day of the new year. The prayers of the old women were like these:

"*Guanyin niang niang*, I pray for my son that he can get me a grandson soon. I will repay your blessing."

"*Guanyin niang niang*, I pray for good weather for our production. If we have a good harvest, we will repay you with oil and incense."

"*Merciful Guanyin niang niang*, you are our savior, I beg for your mercy to protect our village. I also beg for you to bless my grandson so that he can enter the university this year."

Their prayers were closely related to their living experiences and their personal interests, which revealed their expectations of the local deity; in some sense, it also revealed their discontent with the current government, because it shirked its *zeren* of providing social security to the villagers.

To the villagers, all these local deities were their protective gods. Their moral principle of reciprocity also manifested in the relationship between the villagers and the local deities. They offered the sacrifices to these local deities in exchange for their blessings. Temples were destroyed by the Communist government in the campaign of “destroying the Four Out Model customs” (*po si jiu*). In searching for the greater blessing, they quickly reconstructed and restored the traditional temples, the shrines and ancestral hall after the control of state became loosened.

The Reconstruction of *Guanyin* Temple

I remembered the first time I entered into Ku Village. My uncle brought me to visit and worship the grave of my great-grandfather. The grave was located at the middle of the mountain at the other side of the river. When we were walking across the river, I found a small house located at the middle of the mountain. I asked my uncle who lived in the mountain. He told me that was a Temple which housed *Guanyin* -- a god of Buddhism.

I visited the temple several times to participate in villagers' activities. It was only a simple three-wall house without a front wall and luxuriously decorated roof. In the temple, an idol of *Guanyin* sat at the central altar. On the altar, there was incense and a candle pot. In front of the altar, there was a table for the offering of sacrifices (see Picture 8.2). According to my uncle, the temple was destroyed during the campaign of “doing away with superstitions and blind faith”. In the commune era, nobody dared to worship the deities because it would be exposed by other villagers and criticized as “ideologically backward” (*sixiang luohou*). After the rural reform, the villagers began to worship *Guanyin* in the destroyed house. In the mid-1980s, the income of households was still very low and it was impossible for them to raise enough funds among themselves. So the old villagers actively wrote to their overseas relatives for donations. Due to the support of the overseas villagers, they quickly raised enough money and reconstructed their temple.

However, the same as Dean's accurate observation in South-east China, “The permissibility of a ritual depends a great deal on the determination of the local people, the relationship of the village Party secretary with the villagers and with the local

government, the extent of overseas Chinese connections, the wealth and influence of the community, and the constantly changing "political atmosphere. Every ritual puts all these issue on the line" (Dean, 1993:9). Every outcome was the result of negotiation between different parties. The progress of rebuilding the temple in Ku Village was not as smooth as the cadres of ADC intervened in their project. They persuaded the villagers not to rebuild the temple in hurry because they were not sure about the state policy on religion. But the villagers insisted on constructing the temple because they thought the state had no reason to interfere as they used their own money in this project. They also articulated the "freedom of religion" clause in the new Constitution to support their action. But on the other hand, the local cadres made a counter-argument that the government was opposed to "superstitious activities". Then the villagers justified that the project was supported by overseas villagers. In order not to displease the overseas Chinese, as well as not to violate the state policy, the local cadres finally just kept one eye open and one eye closed as before. According to one of the cadres, they allowed the village to build the temple because they often got the message from the newspaper that the Communist government wanted to attract the investment of overseas Chinese and give preferential treatment to them. Compared to the overseas Chinese policy (*huaqiao zhengce*), they seldom got the news about religious policy. After calculating the benefits and cost, they decided not to intervene into the construction. But to the villagers, they believed the *Guanyin* always blessed the Ku villagers. They rebuilt the temple in the mid of 1980s. Their average income increased from about 400 yuan in 1984 to about 3,000 yuan in 1995. They attributed the improvement of their living standard year by year to their reconstruction of the *Guanyin* Temple, which earned the blessing from *Guanxi*.

Reconstruction the *Gongwang* Shrine

When I was still in the village, one day Uncle Si told me that the *Gongwang* shrine had been renovated. It was because *Gongwang* had been moved to a temporary place during the renovation. In 1995, the old villagers thought it was the right time to rebuild the *Gongwang* temple. The reconstruction was led and organized by a middle-aged woman who was Uncle Mang's wife. She collected the funds from household to household. Her family contributed the main part of financing in this reconstruction.

After completing the construction, they chose a lucky day (*jiri*) to move *Gongwang* back to the new house and invited a religious specialist to hold the *kaiguan dianyan* (rituals of consecration of the god involving dotting the eyes with blood or red ink to open them to the light).

On that day, the hillside behind the power station was filled with plenty of 'heat and noise' (*renao*) -- as it was packed with people, who were chaotically boisterous, different voices, and clashingly colorful. The representatives of each households carried their basket of sacrifices and arrived one after another. When I arrived at the hillside, I surprisingly found that all who had joined in the worship were women (see Picture 8.3).

The shrine was just a simple gravestone with an incense pot. The gravestone was made in the style of a luxury house. The worship still did not start because they were waiting for the *zaima* to come from the town. *Zaima* are women who practice abstinence from meat for a long time. They were different from *nigu* (Buddhist nun) because they did not practice tonsure and did not live in a temple. Uncle Mang's wife invited a *zaima* to hold the ceremony of setting up the shrine of *Gongwang*. The *zaima* performed different sorts of rituals in the ceremony. The *zaima* sat cross-legged in front of the shrine and put her palms together like a Buddhist (see Picture 8.4). She also gave a speech and sang songs with peculiar pronunciations of difficult text. Then she stood up and held a bowl of uncooked rice, while she sang continuously. She turned to the villagers and scattered the rice against the villagers. The villagers received the scattered rice carefully by rolling up their clothing because they believed that the rice would bring blessings from *Gongwang*. The ritual was carried out with a multitude of different meanings, which I found quite impossible to interpret. The villagers also did not understand the meanings of the rituals. They came because they wanted to obtain blessings. Some only went for the 'heat and noise' and to get favors granted, not for the essence of this religious practice. Some children also joined in for fun and learned to honor the deities from the adults with sticks of incense.

The collective religious activities played an important role in forming the village identity. Through the rebuilding of the local shrines and collective worship,

they were aware of their common interest. As for them, both *Guanyin* and *Gongwang* were their protective gods who protected the interest of the villagers.

8.3. Formation of the Ancestral Hall Committee

Many researches have shown that religion is an important aspect of peasant life in rural China and ancestral halls are the traditional centers of popular ritual. The earlier ethnographic studies on Chinese society paid much attention to this aspect (e.g. Baker, 1979; Freedman, 1958; Yang, 1948; Yang, 1961; Fei, 1939; Granet, 1962; Potter and Potter, 1990). We know that rural China has experienced great transformation since 1949. Under the ideology of Mao, everything that belonged to the 'old' tradition was destroyed in the name of "*pojiu lixin*" (destroying the old and establishing the new), especially during the Cultural Revolution, when all the religious activities were abandoned. The ancestral halls were occupied by the government, the temples were destroyed and the clergy were arrested.

The state intervention did not totally eliminate the cultural heritage in Chinese villages. In the late of 1980s, it was reported that the ancestral halls had been rebuilt again in most places of rural China (Siu, 1989; Feuchtwang, 1996; Potter & Potter, 1990). Although the phenomena seemed to be the same, apparently, the local practices of these reconstruction were in fact very different. In some villages, the local cadres were bound up with the revival of local tradition; in some villages, the overseas Chinese were actively involved in the rebuilding of these local tradition; and in some villages, the reconstruction was motivated by the villagers themselves. In Ku Village, the local cadres were excluded from the reconstruction of ancestral hall. Indeed, the overseas Chinese and the villagers themselves actively participated in the movement of reconstruction. To me, this "stubbornness" of the Chinese peasants is not without reason and cultural meaning. They do not easily give up this symbolic system because it refers to their indigenous internal organization and to the physical world around them. It was also their foundation of ethnic identities. Through religious ritual, ethnic identities are formed, and the meaning and the values of the world were produced and reproduced. To understand the cultural meaning of ancestral hall and ancestral worship, I think we have to look into the everyday language.

Their *Gen* (roots)

Kejia ren a, kejiaren! ni gen zai hechu? yuan zi he fang?

O, Hakka people, Hakka people! Where are your roots? Where do you come from?

-- *Hakka Folk Song*

I think most of the scholars of Hakka studies would not deny that Hakka people have a strong conception of roots (e.g. Lo, 1994; Yang & Tan, 1994; Aijmer, 1994; Zhong etc. 1997). In their folk songs, they express the urge to search for their roots. In their family letters, we know how much they miss their homeland. The concept of root is closely correlated to their social identity. In Guangdong, the Hakka identify themselves as Hakka. Among Hakka, the villagers identify themselves to different villages, different surnames, different kinship and then different families. Without their roots, they would lose their identity.

They often talked about “*luoye guigen*” (fallen leaves have to return to their roots), that meant they had to die in their homeland. Homeland was their source of roots. It was a great regret dying outside their homeland. The unfulfilled wish of those overseas villagers who could not return to their homeland was to bring their bone ashes back to the villages. It was also their children's responsibility to fulfill their wish. Those villagers who cannot fulfill their responsibility would feel guilty and blame themselves as having “no filial piety”. While I was staying in Ku Village, Uncle Zhun brought back his father's bone ashes from Indonesia. The tomb of his father had been constructed by his brother, who had stayed in the village for several years. The style and the location of the tomb were designed by his father based on the principle of *fengshui* before his death. The whole funeral was followed to the traditional rituals which involved all the members of the village. The *fengshui* specialist was invited to hold the ceremony. The devotion and ceremonious funeral revealed the seriousness of the villagers to the matter. Uncle Zhun told me that it was his father's final will. What impressed me was he said “I am so happy to fulfill my *zeren*, I think my father must have a smile on his face in the nether world (*han xiao jiuquan*).”

The villagers' sense of *gen* was also manifested in their memory of their forefathers and patriarchal clan, the virtues and contribution of their ancestors in everyday chatting. Every time I returned to Ku Village, they told me about the contribution of my great-grandfather and my grandfather to village education.

Ancestral halls were the symbol of their roots. Through worshipping of their ancestors, they found the identity which linking between them and their clan; and through their ancestral worship, we could also find the relationship of reciprocity between ancestors and descendants. Ancestral worship was the continuation of the parents/child dependence after the death of parents.³ Death did not release the responsibility of the sons to their parents, it merely altered the form in which his duty takes. Descendants serve and worship their ancestors, and in return for the sacrifices and service, the ancestors gave to their descendants such blessings and assistance which were in their supernatural power.

Reconstructing Their Ancestral Hall

As the ancestral hall was so important to the villagers, they decided to rebuild their ancestral hall. In the village, most of the villagers' ideas came out in their everyday chat. The idea of organizing the ancestral hall committee also came from their discussion at Uncle Bin's home.

Uncle Bin, an elder villager, lived in market town. He was about 62 years old. Because he was more highly educated and came from a wealthy family, he earned high respect from the villagers. Also because he was willing to help the villagers solve their problems, he had a good relationship with the villagers. Again, because his sister was rich in Indonesia, every time the village needed financial support from the overseas Chinese, Uncle Bin would write to his sister for a donation. When the villagers went to the periodic market (*ganji*) every week, they liked to visit him on the

³. According to Baker (1979:71), "the importance of reciprocity could be seen very clearly in Chinese family relationships, and the sense of mutual responsibility between parents and son was central to the operation of the family as a continuing and strong unit. When the son was young and the incapable was fed, clothed, housed and educated by his parents. As he grew older so he began to take on more and more tasks and achieve a state of comparative self-reliance where he was putting into the family quite as much as he was taking out ... It would then be his turn to feed, clothe, shelter, and care for his parents; thus directly reciprocating their previous care of him."

way. One day when Uncle Wen, Uncle Si and Wen-ming went to visit him, they talked about the worn-out ancestral hall.

Uncle Wen: Every time the overseas relatives return to Ku Village, they sigh over the ancestral hall having long been out of repair. I feel sad about it too. As Wangsheng Gong's descendants, we cannot maintain our ancestral hall properly. After we pass away, I don't think we will feel ease at facing our ancestors.

Uncle Bin: I've been thinking about an idea for a long time. Because I have been busy, I have not been able to find time to discuss it with you.

Uncle Wen: What 's the idea?

Uncle Bin: It is about the ancestral hall. I agree with you that we have to fulfill our responsibility to maintain our ancestral hall. I've talked with several overseas kin-men. They all promised to donate some money in the reconstruction of our ancestral hall.

Uncle Si: Well, that's a good idea. But who will be willing to take the lead and mobilize the others?

Uncle Bin: Brother Si, I think we have to take up this obligation. In our village, we have higher beifei (seniority in the clan). If we don't take the lead, who dare?

Uncle Wen: You are right. But we are old. We can just chumian (appear personality)? Wen-ming, all the matter still depends on you to chuli (devote your strength).

Wen-ming: In our village, there are many young laborers. If you can get the funds, I will mobilize the labor.

Uncle Bin: Brother Qiang is also concerned about the ancestral hall. Next week, I will return home and discuss the details with Qiang.

Uncle Si: Do we need to inform the ADC?

Wen-ming: Forget about them, now every village is reconstructing their ancestral hall. How can they manage all these cases?

After the discussion, Uncle Bin drafted a proposal and sent it to the overseas Chinese compatriots. They also asked the villagers' opinions household by household. The overseas clan members responded to the proposal rapidly. There were 110 people actively making donations for the reconstruction of an ancestral hall. In the end, they collected about thirty thousand RMB. Uncle Bin was responsible for the project of maintaining the ancestral hall; Uncle Wen was in charge of the

financing of this project; and Uncle Qiang was responsible for the production of a new sacrifice table and mourning dress.

After five month's of reconstruction, the ancestral hall became rose anew (see Picture 8.5). The *zhaoqian* (the enclosing wall) was re-strengthened and re-painted. The *doufang* (the bracket which supports a block of wood) was also reconsolidated. The *tianmian* (skylight) and *weiping* (threshing ground) were re-paved with cement. A pair of *menlians* (gate couplet) were painted on both side of the door, reading '*xiangxian shize, guobao jiasheng*' (the virtue of village will be carried forward generation by generation, the treasure of nation will be proclaimed family by family). A *tanglian* (hall couplet) also was painted inside the hall, reading "*xiaoyou wei jiazheng, wenzhang bao guoen*" (repay the family's debt of rearing with piety, requite the nation's debt of gratitude with an essay). All the couplets were written in black characters with red background which very much attracted peoples' attention. The *shenkan* (shrine) was also painted in a new color. Above the shrine, there were eight big characters written in yellow color with red background. It was written that "*tianqi xinyun zude chongguan*" (God's new blessing makes the virtue of ancestors shine again). There were there large framed red papers hanging on the wall. One was the name of a list of donors and the amount they donated; one was the management pledge of the ancestral hall; and the other was about the roots of ancestors in Ku Village.

The rebuilding process was not without any disputes among the villagers. Some villagers complained to me about the high rebuilding cost; some villagers had doubts over the ways the responsible people spent the money. However, the villagers just gossiped behind their back because face to face confrontation would hurt the *ganqing* (warmth) and *mianzi* (social honor) of those involved. The reconstruction also affected the fishpond in front of the ancestral hall because they had to lower the water level to re-consolidate the foundation of the threshing ground. Liang, who contracted out the fishpond, asked for the compensation from the ancestral hall council because some of his fish died when the water level was lowered.

The Formation of Ancestral Hall Council

After the *daitouren* (those who played a leading role) decided to rebuild the ancestral hall, they decided to form the ancestral hall council for the sake of managing the affairs of Ku Village. Uncle Qiang was nominated as the *lishizhang* (director) of the council. Uncle Bin himself took the post of *fulishi* (vice-director) of the council. Uncle Wen was assigned as the *siku* (treasurer) and *wenshu* (secretary). Uncle Si was the *baoguan* (storekeeper). All of them were not elected by the villagers. They automatically became the leaders because they had high seniority in the kin and they contributed a lot to the reconstruction of the ancestral hall as well. Although Wenming also actively participated in the reconstruction, he was still too young and lacked experience in taking charge of the affairs of kin. The last post was *citang guanliyuan* (ancestral hall administrator). They opened the last post for election because *guanliyuan* would manage the ancestral hall everyday, so it needed the villagers authorization for this post. Uncle Bin explained that "We don't want the people to say we are undemocratic. Elections can also silence the villagers when the administrator has conflict with other villagers. You know, the administrator is elected by them. They can't say anything." In this sense, I cannot say the villagers really credited the institution of election. They practiced election only for some practical concerns, leaving no excuse for other people to criticize them. This was the reason why Wenming insisted on having an election when he replaced Uncle Leng as village head.

In the process of reconstruction, the ancestors' tablets (*zuxian lingwei*) had to be moved to another place. After finishing the reconstruction, the *lingwei* had to put the tablets back to their original places (*chongdeng baozuo*). According to Chinese tradition, for good fortune, they had to choose a good day for this important event. So they checked the almanac (*tongsheng*) and found that the 19th of September would be a good day. Then the members of the ancestral hall council organized mass meetings to discuss the arrangements of that day. Different from the meetings held by the village cadres, almost all households sent their representatives to attend the meeting (see Picture 8.6). The meeting was held at Shan Yu house. In the meeting, Uncle Bin gave a talk to the villagers:

... I am very glad to see so many uncles, aunts, brothers and sisters coming to join our meeting. As you know, we have completed the rebuilding of our ancestral hall. The *lingwei* has to be put back to the original place as soon as possible. We have chosen the day of 19th in this month according to *tongsheng*. The date is drawing near, and we have to discuss arrangements with you. I know you are tired after spending a whole day of working, but the issue of ancestors is important to everyone. We are Wansheng Gong's descendants, we must work together in one heart to make our village better ...

In Uncle Bin's talk, he announced the establishment of the ancestral hall council. He also read out the regulations of ancestral hall that the villagers had to follow. That evening, the villagers also elected their own ancestral hall administrator. Aunt Tong was elected as an administrator who was responsible for cleansing the hall and worshipping the ancestors with candles and incense on the lunar 1st and 15th of each month. Under the regulations, the administrator could get a 15-yuan subsidy from the ancestral hall council, although Aunt Tong refused to accept the subsidy because she considered it her obligation to serve the ancestors.

In the early morning of the 19th of September, there was a collective worship in Ku Village. The good time (*ji shi*) to put the tablets back to the shrine was 5:45 a.m. So everybody had to arrive before the good time. So in the evening of the 18th, many villagers were busy preparing their sacrifices. Some young villagers did not even want to sleep because they had to wake up so early. When the sun rose, the sky became clearer and clearer. The lights were shining in every household's room and the members of the council went to the ancestral hall earlier than the other villagers. They arranged the sacrifices tables starting from the shrine to the gate of the hall. Aunt Tong was busy cleaning the pot of incense and candles, the ground and tables. At about 5:00 a.m., the villagers came to the hall in succession. Every villagers put on their clean clothes. Each household offered their sacrifices including *sansheng* (three kinds of meat), fruits, incense, candles and paper money. The tables were full of sacrifices. The villagers offered all the best food to their ancestors. Of course, in the process, the households also competed with one another for wealth and prestige by comparing their sacrificial offerings. The members of the councils acted as leaders to organize the worship and kept the order. At 5:45 a.m., they respectfully put the tablets back to the shrine, then they collectively made a deep bow to their ancestors. In the end, they let off firecrackers. The children joined the fun and looked for the

unfired firecrackers on the ground. After the worship, the council also treated the villagers to an open-air film shown in the village. The Ku Village was full of heat and noise (*re nao*) the whole day. The villagers, especially the older ones, were very happy and touched and they shared with me that there had not been so much collective enthusiasm in the village for a very long time. It was a great comfort for them to see the Kus re-uniting together and doing something for their ancestors.

The Functions of Ancestral Hall Council

The ancestral hall council became the village organization and the members became the leaders of the village. They actively managed the affairs of the village, and after rebuilding the ancestral hall, they carried out the project of paving a cement road in the village.

The idea of paving a cement road was brought on by the younger villagers when they chatted together in Wen-ming's house. During their conversation, someone suddenly mentioned about the poor situation of the village roads.

Kim: Lunar New Year is drawing near. Do you remember last new year?

Ming: How can I forget? That's a terrible new year. It was raining day after day. All the roads became muddy and rugged and no vehicle could pass. Any vehicle that dared to try would get stuck in the mud.

Da: Even the motorcycles couldn't go to town.

Kim: No driver in the township wanted to get passengers to our village no matter how much you paid. I hope this won't happen this year.

Xin: This terrible road really affected our pomelo business. During the rainy days, the traders find it difficult to purchase our pomelo.

Wen-ming: I think we have to solve this problem by ourselves. As I know, it is quite popular to raise funds from individual households for public utility in other villages. Why don't we follow this method? In our village, there are so many young laborers. If they can contribute free labor, the cost won't be too high. Even if we cannot raise enough, we can pave the road up to our limited budget. Everyone has suffered enough because of the terrible road. I think they also want to improve transportation.

Xin: Everyone has to use the road. Who dare say no?

Wen-ming: All right, if we really get started, nobody present here can escape. OK, let's go to discuss it with Uncle Bin. Anyone free can go with me.

The young villagers led by Wen-ming immediately went to visit Uncle Bin. They told Uncle Bin about the idea of paving the village road by raising funds from individual household. Uncle Bin strongly supported their idea and promised to write letter to overseas villagers for donations. Uncle Bin was the first one asked by the young villagers to contribute funds for paving a road. The ancestral hall council promoted this idea in the village. Every household actively and positively responded to this project and quickly, eighteen thousand-yuan was raised from individual households. Overseas villagers also contributed about 2,400 yuan after receiving the letter from the ancestral hall council. A former villager who was married in another village also contributed five tons of cements after hearing the news of paving the road of her home village. Brother Ming who was now running the cement business in Meixian also provided 50 tons for this project at preferential prices. Brother Qi-yuan transported the materials for the village gratuitously. Uncle Bin borrowed a concrete mixer from his construction brigade and to save the cost of paving. The villagers got the stone from the riverbed.

All members of the village were mobilized regardless of their age. They spent ten days and nights paving the road from main entrance of the village to Chengqing House. Because of the limitation of funds, they could not finish the part from Chengqing House to the temple of God of the river. During these ten days and nights, all middle-aged and young male villagers contributed their labor without compensation. The old villagers and women made the tea and cooked the rice gruel for them. In the morning, Uncle Si and Uncle Bi also made the bread (*mantou*) for those who participated in paving. As they told me, every day they worked for more than ten hours until late into the night. Most of the villagers were moved by their sacrificial acts. Every time when I asked them about this event, they spoke highly of the young villagers and flaunted villagers' uniting in one heart.

The ancestral hall council planned to pave the unfinished part in August after I left in 1996. The budget was about fourteen to fifteen thousand yuan. They had got twelve thousand-yuan in donations from one of the overseas villagers. They

continued to send the letter to the overseas villagers for financial support. They were also going to raise fund from the households after the villagers sold their pomelo. When I was writing up my thesis in London, they wrote to tell me that they had completed the project of road paving because they had received another large donation from a overseas relative.

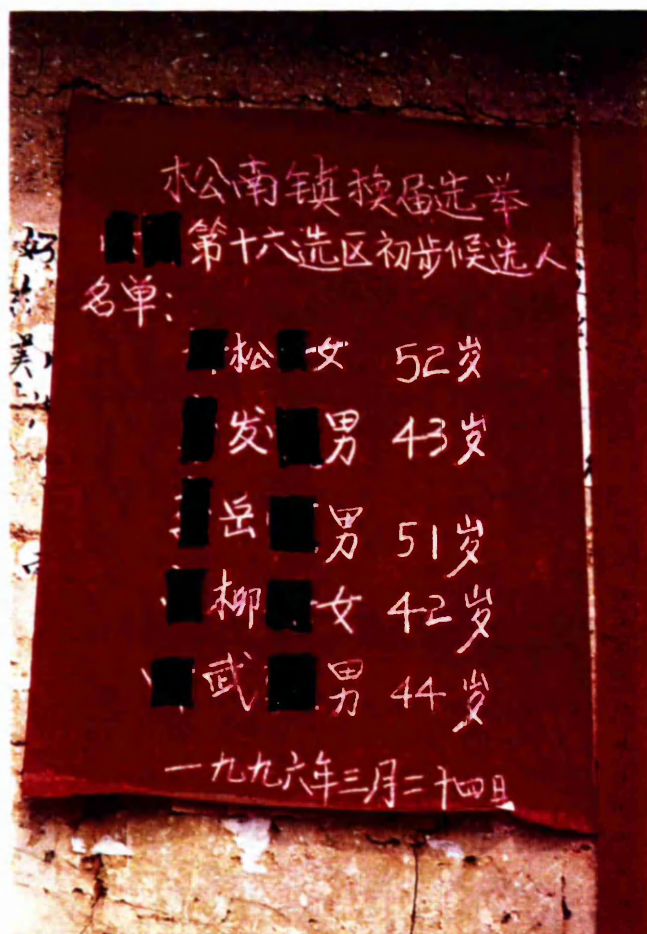
They had many other plans for construction in their village. For example, they planned to construct the water system in the village; they also wanted to set up an elders fund to help the old villagers without children. The council also had a critical idea of building an the arch over the gateway (*menlou*). They had designed the arch and chosen the location based on the guidance of the fengshui teacher. The design which they showed me was a traditional style (see Picture 8.7). A *henpi* (a horizontal scroll bearing an inscription) hung over the arch, and written on it was KU VILLAGE. The *menlian* (vertical scrolls) were written “*xishui wanyan liu wangu, xiluan junqiao wei quancun*” (the meandering stream runs through forever, the high and steep mountain protect the whole village). The construction of the arch was in need of financial support from overseas villagers too. The names of donors would be carved onto the arch to remember their contribution to Ku Village. I thought the village gate would distinguish Ku Village from other villages. This would also further strengthen their Ku identity and form the boundary between Kus and other surnames.

8.4. Discussion

Locating the discussion in the peasant politics, this chapter attempts to illustrate how the new social movement formed in rural China. People in Ku Village have abandoned the conventional form of resistance -- direct confrontation. They demonstrate how peasant activism actively creates alternative modes of political vision and identity. Their creation derives from local spirits of synthesis and invention which rest on the their everyday practices and concrete living experiences. The birth, or rebirth if you like, of the Ancestral Hall Committee was the villagers' response to the evaporation of the *zeren* of the socialist state in the post reform era. It also revealed the villagers' disappointment of re-establishment of contracted obligation between the local government and villagers in future. Without remaining

expectation, without collective demonstration, and without violent clashes. They sidelined the government by establishing their own village organization based on traditional authority (kin elders) and village lineage. The new village organization represented a new spirit of local cooperation, autonomy and democracy. It replaced the function of the village government to take charge of a small community public work project like the reconstruction of an ancestral hall and the repair of the road.

To me, the moderate movement of the Ku villagers has significant political implication. The formation of the Ancestral Hall Committee in fact reflects the villagers' disappointment with the government; meanwhile, it delegitimizes the village committee and local government. The traditional organization replaced the functions of the local government in the village. The new leadership has undermined the power of the village cadres and has reshaped the exercise of power. These leaders were not integrated into the formal bureaucratic system. Different from the local cadres, the power and privilege of these local leaders were not granted by the state and in this sense they did not depend on the state for their legitimacy. In contrast, the legitimacy of these local leaders was granted by villagers based on their ability of organizing expensive reconstruction, making large religious contributions and giving personal loans and donations and so forth. Therefore, to me, the revival of traditional organization in a certain sense is another form of resistance of the villagers because their action changes the power relationship in the village. Furthermore, it makes the local government functionless and the local cadres simply figureheads of power and authority.



8.1. announcement of grassroots election





8.2. worshipping guanyin



8.3. gongwang shrine



8.4. worshipping gongwang

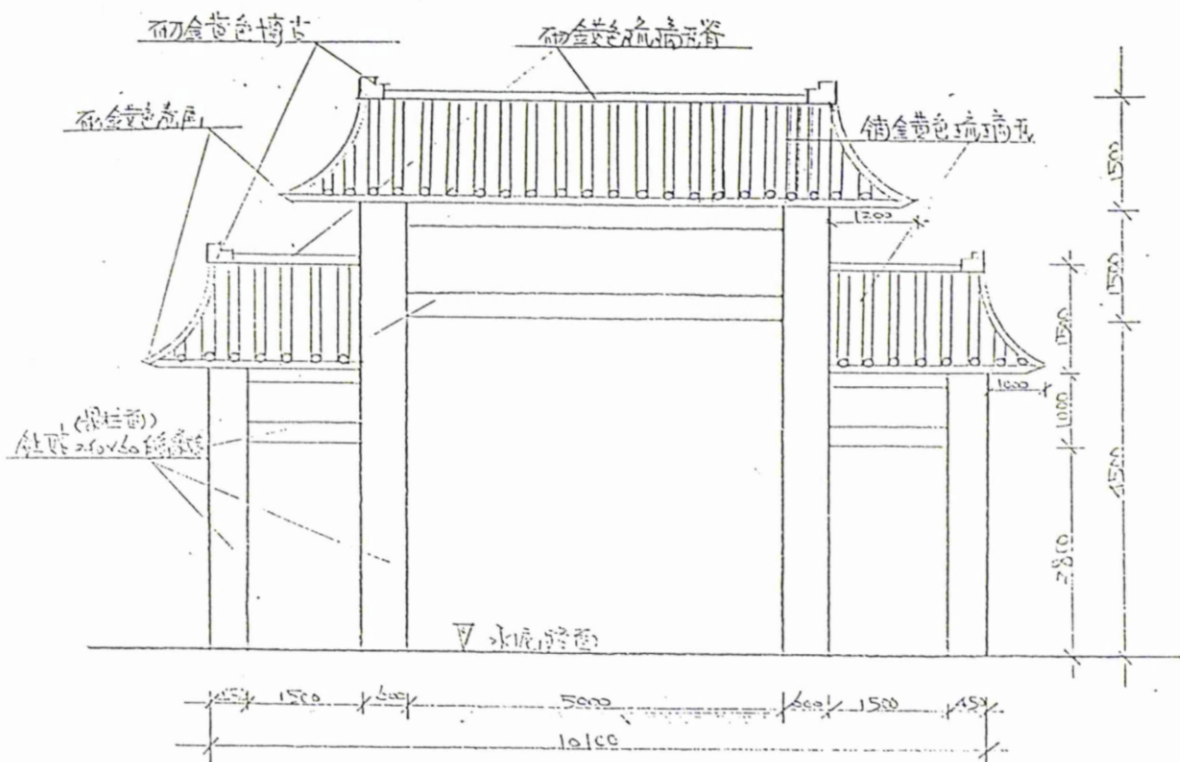


8.5. new ancestral hall



8.6. villagers' meeting

8.7. design of the village arch



赵燕生《带泪的伤口》插图评述

Chapter 9: Conclusion

It was my last day in Ku Village, and I visited and said say good-bye to those households whom I had good guanxi with. The villagers seemed to be reluctant to part and urged me again and again to come back in the year after I completed my course in London. I was so touched and promised to come back and raised funds for road paving for them. Staying in the village for such a long time, ganqing had been established between the villagers and me.

Until I left the village, the people still didn't understand why I stayed there for such a long time, although I tried to explain to them. The methodology of anthropology was alien to them. They re-categorized my work in their native terms -- shehui diaocha (social investigation). To them, zhishi fenzi (intellectuals) were obligated to serve the poor and speak for justice (zhengyi). Last night when I visited Uncle Chang, his wife indicated this expectation to me. She said, "Hok-Bin, you intellectuals have to speak for the nongmin (peasants). Nongmin's life is still very hard. Today the government says we have to pay this sort of tax, tomorrow it says we have to pay another sort of fee. We are almost out of breath. You have to report our difficulty to the higher level (shangji). You shouldn't exaggerate the improvement of our living standard. You know, in Mao's China, false reports got the peasants into a serious trouble."

The villagers' expectation remained in my mind. At night, I couldn't fall to sleep. I was thinking about my subjective position; thinking about my zeren to the villagers; thinking about the question of intellectuals and power. ...

* * * *

Society is a very mysterious animal with many faces and hidden potentialities, and... it's extremely shortsighted to believe that the face society happens to be presenting to you at a given moment is its only true face. None of us knows all the potentialities that slumber in the spirit of the population.

-- Vaclav Havel, 1990

How do I know that you exist, and if you do, how do I know that my concepts represent your real existence?

-- E. P. Thompson, 1979

Those who act and struggle are no longer represented, either by a group or a union that appropriates the right to stand as their conscience.

-- Foucault & Deleuze, 1977

In this final chapter, I think it is time for me to self-reflect on writing of the whole text. Many events have been presented, many everyday conversations have been quoted, much resistance has been talked about, but, maybe you will also challenge me as E. P. Thompson -- "how can you know that your concepts represent the reality of rural China and its population?"

The villagers asked me to speak for them, but the question is "can I speak for them? "Can I fully understand the 'reality' or 'true face' of them?" In the trend of any "post-" style of thinking, no one dare to think that the total representation of others' life experiences is possible, and no one can declare that they can speak for others. In some sense, I agree with the postmodernist critique of positivism, which emphasizes the objectivity and power of the social scientist to discover the "reality" through the scientific method. But does it mean that thus I have to shut up my mouth and stop doing any research and writing something? My answer is "No".

As Spivak (1993) says, and I agree with, "the intellectual's solution is not to abstain from representation." What we have to be careful of is that we must be aware that any sort of narration and writing cannot be neutralized from his/her own consciousness or ideology. "[T]here are people whose consciousness we cannot grasp if we close off our benevolence by constructing a homogeneous Other referring only to our own place in the seat of the Same or the Self" (Spivak, 1993:84). We have to recognize what we have done is not to represent them but to learn to represent ourselves. What we say and write only provides one version, but not the only one, of narration, which may serve as a deconstruction and counterpossibility for the grand narration granted to the oppressed subject by the dominant group.

9.1. Peasants as Practical Philosophers

I agree with what Foucault said "the [masses] know perfectly well, without illusion; they know far better than [the intellectual] and they certainly say it very well...." (Foucault & Deleuze, 1977:207). People in the Ku Village have exemplified this point. They do know the histories well; they know the local politics far better; they know the essence of the socialist state clearer than any outside intellectual.

They have shown us that they have their own views of human relationships and political models, but with a different logic of thinking and practice. They have their own conception of justice and equity; they have their perception of good government/leadership and immoral government/leadership; they have their own definition of *zeren* or mutual obligation in their *guanxi* with others. We think they do not know because they lack the instrument to grasp it, to speak about it; they do not ask and argue in the systematic way of an academy; they do not think about moral issues in precisely defined abstract terms, and they do not make it a major priority to link such abstract terms together into a logically consistent system; they also do not systematically present their philosophical thinking and give lectures about their thinking formally (Bourdieu, 1992; Madsen, 1984; Geertz, 1973). Instead, they "discuss" and "introduce" these in everyday life, e.g. in chatting, funerals, ceremonies, festivals and other daily occasions. They also show their thinking by performing dramatic gestures, by uttering invective, by gossip table talk, and noisy altercations. They summarize their argument in aphorism and tell it in the local language which is filled with colloquial expressions, colorful local sayings (*chengyu*), and references to the rich legacy of traditional stories passed on for centuries. In Bourdieu's words, "they control a knowledge, a knowledge of practice" (Bourdieu, 1992). So the ordinary people are philosophers of practice. Their discourse involves a constant between word and deed.

By saying peasants as practical philosophers or active agents, it does not mean that we have to valorize the oppressed group as subjects who can speak, act and know for themselves. As Spivak criticizes Deleuze, this "leads to an essentialist, utopian politics" (Spivak, 1993:71). I think we have to recognize that the peasant in socialist China encounter a lot of structural limitation, and there exists a system of power which blocks, prohibits, and invalidates this discourse and this knowledge; thus, their

voice cannot be easily heard in the public stage. Although we, act as intellectuals with conscience and consciousness, can transform their everyday discourse into text and writing, again, it is never the case of the oppressed group speaking for themselves. It is we intellectuals who have spoken for them and written for them, it is us who represented ourselves.

9.2. The Politics of Memory

Narratives of history are one of the ways villagers employ to reveal their views of their government, their country and their life. In this text, I never intended to argue about the reality of history as such, but how the history was constructed and reconstructed by different parties for their own sake of interest.

During Mao's era, like the other regime, the Chinese Communist government had sought to base its legitimacy on the creation of a "new socialist society" and rejection of an "old feudal society". To obtain consent from the masses that "the CCP government was the only one that could save them from the 'old society'", the CCP government had to develop an hegemonic discourse and way of historic narration for legitimizing its authority through different political propaganda. Indeed, at the initial stage, the legitimacy of CCP was consolidated by the prospective economic and social benefits promised by the new socialist system, such as egalitarianism, food and the shelter, medical care, education, job security, stable prices, social stability, and elimination of social evils, all of which were seriously missing or lacking under the Nationalist regime. An informal "social contract" like relationship between the CCP and the masses was established through restructuring the political and economic organization. The main responsibility of the Communist government was to provide the socialist benefits or goodies and to eventually realize the "Communist paradise" as promised in Chinese Marxism; in return, the public was expected to accept one-party rule.

During the first ten years in the history of the PRC, the CCP did make some impressive progress in realizing socialist goals. For example, almost full employment was achieved in the cities, job security was guaranteed, income was by and large equalized prices were stabilized, minimum human needs were basically satisfied. But

the Chinese Communist government has experienced a legitimacy crisis since the late 1950s because the rural collectivization had created a sluggish and almost stagnant agriculture of China. To the peasants, the government had broken its promise of a better life for them. The CCP government relied more on ideological purification and mass political campaigns to relegitimize its rule. The campaigns included Anti-Rightist movement, the Socialist Education campaign, the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, the Anti-Confucius campaign, Criticizing Water Margin campaign, Study the Dictatorship of the Proletariat campaign, and a Campaign against Capitalist Roadsters and so on. The incessant political campaigns greatly influenced the normal economic activities, especially during the first three years of Cultural Revolution. Between 1966 and 1968, industrial and agricultural output dropped thirteen per cent. The exhausted economic situation and concrete living experience prevented the Communist regime from obtaining the consent of the peasants.

The Ku villagers have by no means forgotten the history from 1949 to 1979, especially the important events like land reform, three years of hunger and Cultural Revolution. Treating history as culture, we know that each actor is powerful in endeavouring to maneuver to define or seize control of historical narration. Although the Ku villagers did not have the instruments to write their own history like an academic writer, they had their own way of keeping their history. The old Ku villagers transmitted their history or knowledge of history to the younger generation through everyday conversation. Indeed, the history in their narration is fragmented and contradictory as sometimes they negated the CCP government in Mao's era; sometimes they praised it instead. They contradicted themselves in presenting the history, but putting their narrative into a speaking setting, we understand why they present the history like that and what they say is meaningful at that historical moment. As they say "*guwei jinyong*", they adopted history as their tool of struggling and to serve for their own interests at present.¹

¹ That's similar to Susan Wright's assertion, "Symbols and ideas never acquired a closed or entirely coherent set of meanings: they were polyvalent, fluid and hybridized. Key terms shifted in meaning at different historical times" (1998:9).

9.3. *Economy, Culture and Politics*

Officially, China's reform was formally carried out in 1979. But it has been argued by many scholars (e.g. Vogel, 1989; Zhou, 1996; Kellier, 2003; Johnson, 1982; Wang, 1992) that the experiment of rural reform was earlier than this official time. From 1977 to 1978, the peasants themselves had tried to find the way out of poverty. Some peasants and the cadres at the village level in Sichuan and Anhui began to carry out the 'production responsibility system' secretly without the permission of the government. The successful experiment taught the government that the only way to overcome sluggish and almost stagnant agricultural production and earn credit was to follow peasant's idea and dismantle much of the commune structure. So in the early 1980s, when rural reform began, it was reported that peasants in many areas moved quickly to dismantle collective farming and chose instead to farm as individual households. The rural reform in China was often regarded as the result of demand of Chinese peasants who eagerly desired to walk out from under poverty. Their desire of becoming rich was related to the "lack" which was historically created in Maoist past. The *hukou* system and inequality between the rural and urban populations had given Chinese peasants a strong sense of lacking and inferiority. They hoped to become urban residents; they wished their children to no longer have hunger; they desired to be "*churen toudi*" one day. These desires drove Chinese peasants to search for a way of survival. Chinese peasants in this situation invented the "production responsibility system".²

Soon after economic reform was carried out all over the country, the industrial capitalism and a market economy, a socialist market economy if you like, were also introduced into China. For legitimizing the new government in a reform era, by articulating peasants' concrete experience of social lack, "reform and open door" (*gaige kaifang*) was constructed as the only way out of China. Modernization and economic development became a "regime of truth" that was used to supply the justification for its creation of a "good society" or a "new society" under reform, and

² . As Deleuze and Guattari put it clearly, desire and lack are created and often social unconscious, which helps to promote the ideology of a market economy. They said that the creation of desire and lack is the art of a market economy that "involves deliberately organizing wants and needs amid an abundance of production; making all of desire teeter and fall victim to the great fear of not having one's needs satisfied" (1983:28).

provide the basis for its rejection of the development policy by Mao which was defined as wrong, radical and leftist. Mao's theory of "continuous revolution" and class struggle was abandoned and replaced by commercialization, market competition, and economic rationalization. "Being rich is glorious", "let some people become rich first", "making money is the priority" all became the dominated cultural rhetoric and codes in the reform era. The official press also served to adulate the "great role" of Deng Xiao-ping and its government in conceiving and directing the reform. They praised that Deng's economic policy brought the dying rural economy back to life and won the hearts of the peasants. On the other hand, "the gang of four" was described as the sinner of China and the Cultural Revolution was denounced as a catastrophe of the country. In short, they portrayed Chinese reform as a case of Deng's successful policy implementation. As before, peasants were continuously defined as "others". When the government policies came across difficulties and encountered the resistance from the peasants, they attributed it to the backward "mentality of petty peasants" (*xiaonong yishi*) -- that peasants were conservative, unprogressive, unchanging and anti-market.

Again, the state planned pomelo plantation program also borrowed the idea from the village, but developed it into a large scale of commercialized cash crop production. This program has been imposed to villages and transformed the local economy structure as almost all the rural households in Meixian changed to cash crop production and the pomelo became the dominate source of income. But closely looking to the everyday life practice of economy, we would find that the "mentality of petty peasants" stubbornly maintained and which resisted to the invasion of a market economy. Taking economics as culture, we would find that economic practices were also a result of a negotiated process of meaning making, in which agents contested to redefine key symbols which gave a particular view of the world, shaped perception, value and behavior. In Ku Village, villagers' conception of economy, e.g. land, labour, time, and production relationships, were far different from the state promoted market economy. To the villagers, production was for survival and for fulfillment of the demand of the family, which is defined in terms of *zeren* among the family members. For instance, the villagers in Ku Village working harder were for supporting the education of their children, preparing a new house for children's marriage, and other reasons. The labour or exchange of labour in the village was

never calculated in terms of wages, but in terms of *guanxi*. Profit earning through extraction surplus labour was still alien to the villagers. Albeit the government encouraged the peasant to develop large scale *zhuangyuan jingji* (manor economy), subsistence economy and principle of safety was still their first consideration rather than profit maximization. They preferred to avoid economic disaster rather than take risks to maximize profit which was often regarded as modern reason. They had their own strategies, e.g. drudgery of labour, diversification of production, and undifferentiation of labour, to tackle the problems of fluctuation of market price, natural disaster and other uncertainty. In short, treating economics as culture, through the concrete practice of the villagers, we can see that ideology of a market economy cannot totally colonize the mind of the local people.

Of course, the persistence of a subsistence economy in rural China does not imply that the introduction of industrial capitalism and a market economy in the reform era has not had any impact on villagers' cultural conception, e.g. ideas about time, self and work, which have changed their understanding of money and commodities. Some young Ku villagers began learning to think differently about money and "the economy", some even jumped into the stream of making money. They made money not only for subsistence, but also for a better life, for more luxury goods, for a modern (urban) life style and so on. So the young villagers tried different ways to make money such as working in foreign invested factories in the region of Pearl River Delta, changing rice fields to cash plantation, participating in pomelo trading, and some even became involved in "criminal behavior" in the government's sense, such as felling trees in the state's forest area.

9.4. A Sense of Insecurity in the Post-reform Era

The economic development of China during the first decade of reform has earned some credits from the peasants, especially the peasants in the rich provinces like Guangdong, Fujian, Zhejiang. For example, in Mei County, the average income increased from 78.7 yuan in 1980 to 1,178 yuan in 1992. According to the new IMF formula, China's total GNP for 1992 was \$1660 billion and GNP per capita \$1450. Since the early 1990s, China has been described as a rising economic star in the East

and has become the world's third largest economy based on a new calculation formula adopted by the International Monetary Fund (Zhong, 1996).

It is unquestionable that there is rapid economic growth in some parts of China, and people's living standards in a material sense have been noticeably improved in reform era, however, the reform itself created some other problems which have invalidated and delegitimized the socialist regime. One obvious example is the dismantling of the collective which has made the former collective support for the elderly and disabled and for some social services while subsidies for health care and education had either decreased or were now non-existent. The voice of discontent is prevailing in the second decade of reform. In Ku Village, people often complained about the rising inflation, widening income gap, increased uncertainty of life security, the deterioration of social welfare programs, the increasing cost of education, the lack of public utility provision and so on. In their everyday life conversation and dialogue, we can glimpse at their strong sense of insecurity, especially the elderly. They constantly felt that income maintenance or "money in their pocket" was threatened by rising costs of services and lack of protection in times of illness or other needs.

One of the important reasons for causing peasants to have a sense of insecurity was the paralysis of the local administrative organs, e.g. the ADC and villagers' committee. As I pointed out before, the fiscal reforms in the mid-1980s seriously weakened the economic power of those ADC and villagers' committees which are without enterprises and industries. Most of the village organs like Ku Village were no longer able to fund the welfare services and public affairs which were still defined as their *zeren* by the government. Not only village cadres sensed their authority lost, but also villagers sensed their right to enjoy social services evaporating, especially in the post-reform era.

The arbitrariness of fees and tax further strengthened the villagers' sense of lack. They found their earnings barely covered their expenditures (*rubu fuzhi*), which implied that their desire of having a modern/urban living standard was difficult to achieve. For instance, in Ku Village, some villagers time and again told me that they faced financial difficulty these past several years and it was impossible for them to purchase the luxurious goods, e.g. electric housing appliance facilities. The daily comments, like "a village is always a village", "doing farm work is good for nothing

(*mei chuxi*)", "peasants suffer poverty throughout their lives (*yibeizi aiqiong*)", and "city is always better than country", in some sense, unraveled their strong feeling of lack and of inferiority.

9.5. Defining Zeren as Politics

Facing the uncertainty of life security, villagers began to question the *zeren* of the CCP government and challenged its legitimacy. The Ku villagers articulated their entitlement to social security and services as part of a social contract between the government and villagers which in itself is based on notions of exchange, reciprocity and mutual obligation. Such contractual *guanxi* basically is an extended version of the person-to-person *guanxi* among the villagers who practice and cultivate it in everyday life. To the villagers, anyone involved in the *guanxi* network would be expected to fulfill their mutual obligation for maintaining *renqing* or *ganqing*. Similarly, they applied such principle of reciprocity to their *guanxi* with the government. Land contracting underlying the responsibility of the production system in the reform era is a model of such *guanxi*. Based on villagers' interpretation, under the land contract, the government provides them a piece of land. In return for such favor, they are obliged to contract a portion of the produce or pay a cash fee to the government. Furthermore, for exchanging support and loyalty, the government has the *zeren* to provide social security and services in return. Obviously, in the eye of the villagers, a "good government" is obliged to provide social protection, income maintenance and welfare, education and health services, and public utilities provision to meet the needs of the elderly, children, the poor and disabled.

Villagers' conception of the *zeren* of the government was fostered and consolidated by comparative knowledge which accessed from different information sources. The open door policy in the reform era has allowed some free space to the Chinese. People in villages, especially in Guangdong, have had more opportunity to have contact with the outside world. The intervention of modern technology, the relaxing restriction of rural-urban migration, and the free interaction between villages, and the returning of the overseas Chinese, have all provided a variety of information for the villagers. The exposure of many different sorts of information and knowledge have dramatically awakened the cultural and political consciousness of the people

who live in Chinese villages, at the same time prevent the domination of an authoritative interpretation and discourse in rural China. As they often said “*youbijiao jiu zhidao*” (comparison makes the thing clear), one of the most common topics of conversation in Ku Village was about comparative types and costs of welfare, security, education, health and support for the elderly and other provided elsewhere and the role of other local and national governments in the funding and delivery of social security and services. As a villager said “Ku Village is no longer a closed village, nobody can lie to us”, by comparing with other foreign governments, they have learned to think differently about their government and self-interest, and they have found the incoherence and contradictions in the official discourse on the superiority of socialism. There were also everyday comparisons with the “iron rice bowls” of urban residents and with other more prosperous rural regions of China like the Pearl River Delta. The past too was constructed as a comparative yardstick for complaints about the present, and again these comparisons centered on the provision of social security so that constructions of the past focused on memories of “selfless service” by local cadres, and the provision of communal welfare services for the elderly and social services, including barefoot doctors and low-cost education. Although forms of social security and services were remembered as minimal and Maoist China was a period of “fear, hunger and chaos”, subsidized low user-fees, services and about all entreaties for cadres “to serve the people” compared favorably with the present. It seemed to the villagers that the only concern of the present government was with extraction money from their pockets, but did not fulfill their *zeren* by providing benefits in return.

In some sense the CCP government can still control the mass media to a certain extent, but as de Certeau (1987) asserts, no one can control how the users make use of what they absorb, receive, and pay for. Different sources of information open a variety of interpretation. The villagers have their own interpretation of programs based on their own interest. In Ku Village, I found that the Hong Kong mass media had invaded in the village. In the evening, villagers spent most of their time watching Hong Kong TV programs. Most families also had set up satellite TV, and through which they obtained information of other cities and provinces produced by other provinces' TV stations. As strategic actors, villagers are capable of adopting laws, policies statements and other official communications to define the *zeren* of the

local government and village cadres. They defy those local governments and local cadres who fail to fulfil their *zeren*. To defend or advance their interests, villagers challenge the irresponsible government and unlawful cadres and strive to ensure that potentially unbeneficial policies are not implemented scrupulously.

By defining the *zeren* of the government, they constructed their model of "good government" and "good cadres" which became their frame of reference for judging their government and cadres. They refused to fulfill their obligations when they thought that the CCP government was not helping them in their production or providing any benefit to them. In the villagers' view, the local government in the post-reform era was one that often extorted people's wealth under all sorts of pretexts (*qiaoli mingmu*). Different kinds of fees collected by the local government, like the pomelo tax, were attributed to the greed of the local government. So they defined it as an "unreasonable tax". Their discourse of "unreasonable tax" and "reasonable tax" was once again based on their principle of mutual obligation. Their resistance to birth control was also justified by the lack of elderly support from the government, which was entitled as part of the government's *zeren*. In this sense defining *zeren* is politics. By saying defining *zeren* as politics, I mean the villagers' definition of *zeren* is not fixed; its connotation is changeable. They define *zeren* for the sake of serving their own purposes; therefore, they selectively, or even deceptively, quote those beneficial information, e.g. policies statement and Party propaganda, for supporting their claims. Sometimes they may creatively misread laws and vague ambiguous national policies to push for policy change. In this situation, readers should not be surprised to find that sometimes villagers are ambivalent in their judgements and opinions.

9.6. Popular Resistance in Post-reform Era

When I was writing this monograph, I suddenly heard news about a peasants riot in Guangdong from the *South China Morning Post* (August 26, 1997). But this news did not surprise me because it was quite common to hear of peasant resistance in post-reform China. Although some are collective acts of violence and some are everyday forms of resistance; some are audible and some are inaudible.

The dismantling of the commune destroyed the control mechanism in Mao's era. As newly autonomous farmers became more demanding, rural cadres in many locales were finding it increasingly difficult to govern the villagers. Lacking a reliable institutionalized means to obtain funds and ensure acceptance of their commands, many grassroots cadres in Ku Village were left powerless to control the villagers. So most of time the cadres had to keep "one eye open, and one eye closed". Sometimes misreporting and underreporting became the necessary strategies of the village cadres in order to deal with the unwelcome policy and reduce the violent clashes with the villagers as well.³ However, when the "high tide" came, the only way to fulfill the target of the policy was the coercion. First, it was because they faced great pressure from above; second because they could obtain the support from other governmental departments, such as police force.

In recent years, collecting taxes, imposing fees, and enforcing birth control has become the main arena of conflict between the local cadres and the Ku villagers. In responding to the material extraction, e.g. taxation and imposing fees, the Ku villagers have two tactics of resistance. The first one is more open and public. For instance, when the village came to collect the pomelo tax, some of the villagers directly refused to pay because in their mind the tax is unreasonable. The second response to material domination is in the form of disguised, low profile, and undisclosed resistance. For example, to evade the paying of a vehicle registration fee or paying a fine for not having a driver's license, the villagers changed their route of traveling to the township. They also collected the news about the checkpoints from those who had just come back from the township before they departed to the town. They also went to the township by taking their motorbikes in the evening rather than during the day. To evade the slaughtering tax, some sold their pigs to private "illegal" slaughterhouse late at night. Some young villagers secretly cut down the trees in the night as well. Desertion was often the tactics the villagers adopted, who had an "illegal" birth. When the village cadres came to collect the fee for an illegal birth and confiscate their property, they ran away and hid in near and distant villages, they

³. It was reported that many grassroots leaders in other places all too frequently turned to coercion in implementing the state policy. In response, angered villagers sometimes rose up and engaged in various, often spirited forms of resistance. The result is that violent clashes and rural unrest have grown in recent years (Liu Chujiang, 1992, Tang Jinsu and Wang Jianjun, 1989; Li Lianjiang and O'Brien, 1996).

evaded capture, they evaded fines, and they concealed their valuable belongings in their neighbours' house. The villagers sometimes adopted threat and sabotage too.

Responding to the status domination in Ku Village, I found the villagers got used to gossiping about the cadres and spread the rumors to defame the image of the village cadres. Sometimes they created the rumor in order to check the state policy. Gossip and rumor were a powerful way of resistance in Ku Village, which in turn spread quickly and became the "truth" which was then used by the villagers as reasons for justifying their resistance.

Regarding the ideological domination, the villagers openly propagated the counter-ideologies only when they had some strong reasons to support their resistance. Sometimes they cited the laws, government policies, and other official communications to support their arguments when they challenged taxation, the imposing of fees, the corruption of the cadres and so on. Sometimes they applied the universal principle of truth like equality to fight against the unjust treatment by the local government. Confronting ideological domination, the Ku villagers also developed their dissident sub-cultures e.g. folk religion, myth of "protective local gods" and historical heroes for negating the ruling ideology. Their sub-cultures often reflected their hope, belief, worldview and their expectations to the CCP government. In Ku Village, there was widespread and an increasingly public revival of popular religion. Many temples abolished at the time of land reform had been reconstructed. The ideas of ghosts and gods, and "this life" and "the next life" were still deeply rooted among the villagers.

A turning point in the relationship between the government and villagers was the village election. Nation-wide village elections were introduced by the central government, anxious about the strength of the Party in the countryside and aiming to restore trust between the party and its grassroots. Although the elections have been widely applauded as a means of giving villagers a democratic opportunity to elect local cadres of their choice, in Ku Village subsequent interference in village elections by township party officials convinced villagers that there would be no change in local leadership in the foreseeable future. As a consequence, the villagers set aside or sidelined the village government by establishing their own village organization based on kin elders and village lineage. The villagers with their own donations and the aid

of overseas relatives had then turned their attention to rebuilding the ancestral hall of the village, which had both religious, economic and political implications for the government of the village. The ancestral hall council was revived and in effect took over the management of the village. Its first task was the paving of roads, which the local government had not done for many years. They also planned to build the village gate and a new water system in the foreseeable future. Rather than relying on the local government, the villagers excluded village cadres from the ancestral hall council. The village cadres, except the village-oriented ones, were held to be in breach of *zeren* and were left functionless, without any role in the village.

In short, everyday forms of resistance are significant for peasants to protect their own interest. They do not intend to afford the luxury of open and organized, political activity. They are far less interested in changing the larger structures of the state. They are just concerned about their own interest and their village's interest. They actively fight against those who seek to extract taxes, rent and interest. They are capable of constructing their political discourse for the sake of making sense of their resistance. In the construction of political discourse, they are able to articulate the history, law, statement of state policy and other resources which benefit their own interest. This form of resistance has become the way of a peasant life or peasants' political culture. They practice this resistance everyday, consciously or unconsciously. Although there is no organization, no planning and collective action, there is consensus and solidarity shared among the villagers. They cooperate with each other in a form of silence, cheating, feigned ignorance, hiding the facts and so forth.

I can only say that the everyday forms of resistance are significant to the villagers. Actually, they rarely have revolutionary aims like the revolutionary elite. The slogans or targets of revolution advocated by the elite are not necessary representing the goals and interests of peasants. It is unfair to judge the political action of peasants based on an elitist perception. They have their own dynamic and logic of political action, so that the individual action of every resistance is not unreasonable. The individual action of different people is not to say that these actions lack coordination. There are varieties of individual practice with the unity of understanding and ideology which are formed in their everyday life and come from their life experience. No formal organizations are created because none are required.

Therefore, the traditional version of resistance like revolution, violent collective action, large scale social movement, demonstration and so on just tell us something about the organized expression of social conflict, but not everything we need to know.

Appendix 1: Predicament of Ethnography and Crisis of Representation: Some Reflections and Reminders

In the trend of post-structuralist, post-modernist or post-colonialist style of thinking, anthropologists have started to see how power relations and anthropological knowledge are mutually constitutive, and self-challenge and rethink about their traditional methodology and their power of representation. They have been aware of the partiality of truth, and of possible dangers of imposing one's own interpretation on the subject of studies by meaning of writing.

Influenced by the optimistic modernism, modernist anthropologists believed that it was possible to explore the true knowledge of other societies via their scientific method - ethnography. Malinowski, as an important figurehead, in his *Argonauts of the Western Pacific*, declares a victory of scientific ethnography over 'distorted' presentations of the native and claimed that science had "killed" the false representations of other cultures (Malinowski, 1984). Fernandez also says, "We anthropologists may often decry the fact that we make a fetish of fieldwork, yet in almost every case it is the rich data of a fulfilled field experience which is the matrix of significant accomplishment in our discipline" (quoted in Fardon 1990:2). The presuppositions embedded in so-called "scientific ethnography" is that "participant observation" appeals to experience to act as validations for ethnographic authority. "I-witness" or "I was there" or "out there" justify, legitimize and account for authentic representation of other society. As a result, it is not ethnographer's writing itself, but the experience of the author with native people and his personally observation, that gives power to ethnography; that is the participation, the experience obtained in another alien world that authorizes ethnographic writing. This assumption is obviously based on the so called "scientific empiricism" that treats the native people and society as object which can be observed, controlled and manipulated. So intensive fieldwork has become an anchor to secure the safety of the discipline.

However, the romanticized discipline of anthropology has been challenged by the post-colonial writers. Edward Said (1979), Asad (1973) and others accuse that anthropology as a discipline is a participant of the creation of orientalism, which serves the interest of the dominant power in terms of white, western and male. Both Sahlin and

Clastres also have criticized the ethnocentrism, specifically Eurocentrism, which often makes the anthropological writings seriously distorted the picture of other people in other societies (Sahlins, 1974; Clastres, 1987). These reflection concludes that the study of other culture is no longer to seek empirical evidences to proof any universal rules of western progress or human evolution; rather, that the western ways, especially the capitalist modes of organizing human societies and activities are not the only possibilities, left alone to say the best. Anthropologists like Clifford also self-criticize and deconstruct the traditional positivist anthropology. They try to construct the interpretive anthropology as an alternative. Clifford writes:

Interpretation, based on a philosophical model of textual 'reading', has emerged as sophisticated alternative to the now apparently naive claims for experiential authority. Interpretive anthropology demystifies much of what had previously passed unexamined in the construction of ethnographic narratives, types, observations, and descriptions. It contributes to an increasing visibility of the creative (and in a broad sense poetic) process by which 'cultural' objects are invented and treated as meaningful (1988:38).

But Clifford is aware of that although interpretive anthropology exposes a textual dimension to ethnographic writing, it seems to suffer the same symptom as what it attacks with respect to the problem of objectivity. So recent practices come to the consensus that 'ethnographic truths are inherently partial -- committed and incomplete' (Clifford and Marcus, 1986:7). It is argued that "culture" is invented (Wagner, 1980) and the anthropology's "object" is made (Fabian, 1983), as well as the making of ethnography is thus artisanal.

While the interpretive anthropology is preoccupied with the new criticism of the issues of representation, some other anthropologists in recent years concerns more about the political engagement and localizing strategies of ethnographic writing. Richard Fardon and Mark Hobart shared the view that self-critiques of interpretive anthropology still could not escape ethnocentric views of other cultures. Because of the pre-inequality of relationship between the ethnographers and the subject, Hobart argues,

so, despite claiming to embrace the Other and liberate its polyphonic discourse, such approaches perpetuates the vision of the anthropologist as the superior 'knowing subject' who beneficently grants the Other its right to appear on its owns behalf in the circus of contemporary

academe... The cruelest cut of all, however, is that the Other is only authorized to participate according to Western notions of self and action, and so is liable to be deemed not playing fair when it does not co-operate (1990:306)

Thus the problems of registering the Western self as the knowing subject in anthropological practices are still not solved. The self-critique of anthropology on the one hand try to reject the legitimacy of Western knowledge, but on the other hand recognizes that the authority of Western self is inevitable since no matter how one self criticize one's own society , the other cultures are only the reference image. The unsolved question is that the ethnographers still have the power to speak, to construct the others, and to take others as the reference.

It is the eternal problem in social science. We can continue to question in this way without a final solution. To me, the most important thing is that we have to understand our limitation, be aware our subjective position and open our heart to accept the possible danger of imposing our mis-interpretation to the Others. Our purpose of doing research is to understand others rather than to represent a Culture and make a History, in which there is no alternative interpretation. And the only thing we can do is to try to learn from the people and seek an interpretation in terms of perception of the masses themselves, for reducing the opportunity of mis-understanding of other society. To achieve this purpose, we have to take the action and agency of both the fieldworker and the field agents into account.

With to the question of representation, here we come to another issue about the practice of "native anthropology" which emerged in recent debate of anthropology. The aim of native anthropology, as Ong (1996) says, is to articulate alternative modernities of non-western societies in contrast to the western modernity. She argues for redefining the meanings and uses of alternative modernity in the local geographic context as the practice and contribution of native anthropological knowledge. The basic assumption in her argument is that the authentic knowledge can be articulated by the native anthropologists who are lacking of bias of ethnocentrism. Indeed the romanticization of native anthropology makes the native anthropologists into the similar fallacy of experience determinism with their foreign counterparts. Their different type of subjectivity is actually used as means for justifying a new type of "objectivity". The "I-witness" is transformed into "I grow up" or "I am xyz-ness".

"Who they are" are supposed to offer them their authority of representation, as if Culture (with capital C) were written in ones genes, as being "Native" makes them closer to truth than others. As Liu (1996) says, for most native anthropologists, the logic is: they (we) are native, they (we) were brought up in the society, villages (or towns) which they (we) study, so they (we) are closer to truth than others. He says,

The native anthropologist actually created two 'Others': one is the Other of a particular locale in China which constitutes their object of study and the other is the western Other from whom they borrow the theoretical framework and to whom they claim a superiority of being native over their counterparts. That is, on the one hand, native anthropologist used the western Other to claim that their knowledge of Chinese society ... is true since it is empirical and, on the other hand, they used their privileged position of being brought up in the places where they carried out their studies to argue that they know better about the society than the western Other does (1996:16).

In Chinese anthropology, for a long time, the native anthropologists often tended to return to their home village (or towns) as fieldwork sites. Martin Yang returned his home village for ethnographic study, in which he was born and reared there, and lived there until he entered high school (Yang, 1945:ix). He wrote: "... to make the picture real, through the eyes of a person who actually grew up in the community and experienced most of the social life described, the study is concluded with the story of a villager's boyhood"; "... the information given in this study is reliable and that he life picture thus presented is preserved in its wholeness so far as possible" (Yang, 1945:xi). Fei also went to Kaixiangong village which was his native village. He asserted that being a native of Kaixiangong provided him 'special families', that is, linguistic advantage and the possibility to "penetrate into intimate life without arousing suspicion (Fei, 1939:25-6). Their justifications imply that "I-grow-up" or "I brought up there" would make their writing more 'real' and 'comprehensive' than one provided by an outside ethnographer. Of course, I do not deny with them that it is more convenience, either linguistic or social, for native anthropologists to return to their home village. However, I doubt that the native anthropologists have more authentic voices or have more authority in producing local knowledge than alien anthropologists. To me, the question is not whether you are native or not, but what worldview and subjective position you hold. The native anthropologist can totally follow the suit of

their foreign counterparts,¹ and serve as a participant in constructing the “oriental others” without any reflexivities. The native anthropological inquiry can also be made to serve the existing regime (Chiu & Ku, 1998).²

The status of Hong Kong Chinese grants me an ambiguous position in my fieldwork, whatever I like it or not. To the Western people, I am Chinese; but to the villagers, I am not so native indeed. Choosing my father's home village as field site of study undoubtedly brought me some convenience such as linguistic and social linkage and so on. It was also feasible for me to stay for a long time. But there were so limitation due to my ambiguous identity. In the village, I automatically became a kin member, in their term “*zijiren*”, because of my father having direct kindred relationship with the villagers; on the other hand, as a Hongkongese, I was not really an indigenous people. They still kept some distance from me. As a relative of the villagers and a researcher, I self-defined the one like me as a “sub-indigenous” anthropologist.

I remembered first time I visiting the village, they considered my coming as “returning home” (*hui lai jia*) or “visiting relatives” (*tanqin*). They appreciated my “returning home” and ability of speaking their language (*Hakka*) because they thought that implying my acknowledgment of ancestor (*renzu* or *renzong*). My interest and enthusiasm, due to the anthropological instinct, in learning everything in the village also made me accepted by them as they thought that I was humble, in their term “*meiyou jiazi*”. My studying in U.K. also suddenly became part of their honors and pride. For this reason, they often tried their best to help me in obtaining the information I wanted. Treating me as one of their member meant I having to fulfill my obligation and contribute for the village. When there was any project in the village, they would come to me for donation. I also became one of the overseas network which the local cadres and villager competed with each other to appropriate.

Although the villagers treated me as their relatives, sometimes, I found it was quite difficult to participate in their life world. They were aware that I had something different to them because I was still a somewhat foreigner or outsider who came from

¹. Most of native anthropologists are trained in the British or American Institutions as professional ethnographers. They are armed with certain theoretical frameworks as their foreign counterparts.

². See Fred, Y. L. Chiu & H. B. Ku 1998, “Affirming Anthropological Research and Teaching in Asia and South China -- some historico-ethnographic recaps and perhaps, a reminder” in *Future of Anthropology*, CUHK.

Hongkong. They treated me differently such as preventing me to participate into the hard and dirty work, and cooking special food for me. Besides, they did not want to expose the bad things or dark aspects regarding the village to me because they thought it was the thing to be ashamed of (*diulian de shi*) in front of the outsiders. I tried my best to make friends with different groups of people including young villagers, elders, women, village cadres, business men and so on for a better understanding their worldviews and living experience, and sensitivity. And I also hoped that they could identify me with them. However, their keeping distance from me reminded me that totally identifying with them was impossible. To be honest, I was still a so-called "anthropologist" who coming to study their culture. I was still an outsider, their "others" in a sense, but not a "real" member of the village. Even I am a real member of the village, there is no guarantee that I can present a realer picture of the village. This writing (representation of others) was only a result of struggling in understanding and interpreting the possible meaning of the villagers' everyday living experience.

Appendix 2. List of Some Informants

1. ALing -- female, about 38 years old, women representative in Xiaohuang
2. Aunt Guang -- about 64 year old, ordinary villager
3. Aunt Shu-feng -- about 70 years old, former leader, now is Ancestral Hall keeper
4. Aunt Mei-zhen -- about 72 years old, ordinary villager
5. Aunt Xin-gu -- about 65 years old, ordinary villager
6. Brother Feng -- about 35 years old, working in Guangzhou
7. Brother Fu -- about 32 year old, ordinary villager
8. Brother Kan -- about 38 years old, ordinary villager, owns largest area of plantation
9. Brother Kim -- about 23 year old, ordinary villager
10. Brother Li -- ordinary villager, about 29 years old, has worked in the factory of Shenzhen, and now returns to village
11. Brother Mei -- ordinary villager, about 21 years old
12. Brother Ming -- about 43 years old, former vice-party secretary of brigade of Xiaohuang. He joined the army and became state cadres after retiring from military service
13. Brother Moi -- about 19 years old, ordinary villager
14. Brother San -- ordinary villager, about 23 years old
15. Brother Shao -- about 40 years old, ordinary villager
16. Brother Qi-yuan -- about 38 years old, driver
17. Brother Wong -- ordinary villager, about 28 year old, has worked in factory of Dongguan
18. Brother Xian -- 21 years old, studying in University
19. Brother Xin -- ordinary villager, about 24 years old
20. Dongtou -- male, about 32 years old, current village head
21. Lian -- male, about 38 year old, ordinary villager
22. Sister Fang -- about 38 years old, ordinary villager
23. Sister Feng -- about 35 years old, ordinary villager
24. Sister Wang -- about 28 years old, ordinary villager
26. Sister Ying -- about 36 year old, ordinary villager
27. Songsheng -- female, about 55 years old, the party secretary of Xiaohuang production brigade and administrative district
28. Secretary Li -- about 68 years old, former vice-chairman of Agriculture Committee of Mei County
29. Uncle Wen -- villager, about 70 years old, is treasure and secretary of Ancestral Hall Council
30. Uncle Ba -- about 70 years old, ordinary villager
31. Uncle Huang -- about 60 years old former brigade secretary
32. Uncle Bi -- about 70 years old, former brigade leader
33. Uncle Bi's wife -- about 65 years old, ordinary villager
34. Uncle Chang -- villager, about 5 years old
35. Uncle Chang's wife -- villager, about 48 years old
36. Uncle Bin -- ordinary villager, about 60 years old, now lives in Songkou town, is vice-director
37. Uncle Gong -- ordinary villager, about 80 year old
38. Uncle Jiang -- villager, about 50 years old
39. Uncle Leng -- about 58 year old, former village head

40. Uncle Nianhua -- about 55 years old, former brigade leader in Xiaohuang
41. Uncle Qiang -- villager about 58 years old, now is a director of Ancestral Hall Council
42. Uncle Si -- villager, about 73 years old, was storekeeper in Collective era
43. Uncle Si's wife -- villager, female, about 60 year old
44. Uncle Wu -- villager, about 65 years old
45. Uncle Xiang -- about 53 years old, principal of Songxi primary school in Ku Village
46. Uncle Zhun -- 75 years old, overseas relative
47. Wen-ying -- male, 40 years old, primary school teacher
48. Wen-ming -- male, 43 years old, current village head
49. Yue-shun -- about 53 years old, present accountant of Xiaohuang

Appendix 3. Selected Glossaries and Slogans

Glossaries

anlao fengpei 按勞分配	distribution according to work
anxiang wannian 安享晚年	spending their remaining years in happiness
ba shan yi shui yi fen tian 八山一水一分田	eight mountains, one river and piece of land
baiji 拜祭	offering sacrifice
bai jin 白金	white money
bai nian 拜年	mutual visiting in Chinese Year
baiwu tenggui 百物騰貴	everything being expensive
bangong 辦公	handle the official affair
bao guan 保管	store keeper
baobiao 報表	reporting form
baochan daohu 包產到戶	production contracted to household
baochan dao zu 包產到組	production contracted to group
bei lian lei 被連累	being involved into trouble
beifen 輩份	seniority in the clan
benshi 本事	capability
biaomian gongfu 表面功夫	ritual work
bie 別	distinction
binggong banli 秉公辦理	handle the matter impartially
bu dongli 不懂禮	not understand proprieties
bu fu zeren 不負責任	irresponsibility
bu heli de shui 不合理的稅	unreasonable tax
bu xiao you san, wu hou wei da 不孝有三，無後爲大	there are three kinds of unfilial piety, but without male offspring is the most serious one
bu xiao 不孝	not filial piety
bu zhengdang shouduan 不正當手段	inappropriate means
bu 補	nourish
bufa fengzi 不法份子	illegal elements
buheli 不合理	unreasonable
buxiaozi 不孝子	unfilial children
buzhong bu yi 不忠不義	not loyal and righteous
caili 財力	financial capacity
chaodai 朝代	dynasty
chao du 超渡	releasing souls from purgatory by reciting scripture
chao sheng you jidui 超生游擊隊	guerrilla of excess birth
chengshi ren 城市人	urbanite
chengshi 城市	city
chi guojia fan 吃國家飯	state rice
chi jiti fan 吃集體飯	collective rice

chili bu taohao 吃力不討好	entailing strenuous effort but without appreciation
chi xijiu 吃喜酒	drinking the wine of happiness
chijiao yisheng 赤腳醫生	bare foot doctors
chu li 出力	devoting effort
chu mian 出面	appear personality
chu ren tou di 出人頭地	stand out among one's fellow
chuan bu guo qi 喘不過氣	hardly breathe/ nearly out of breathe
chuan menkou 串門口	visiting relatives and friend from door to door/ mutual visiting
chuan zhong jie dai 傳宗接代	carrying on the family line
chun 純	honest, simple or unsophisticated
cou re nao 湊熱鬧	join in fun
cunmin weiyuanhui or cunwei 村民委員會或者村委	villagers' committee
cunmin xiaozu 村民小組	villager groups
da chengshi 大城市	big city
da guofan 大鍋飯	food prepared in a large canteen caldron
dabaogan 大包幹	big contracting of production
dadui 大隊	brigade
dagong 打工	working
dagongmei 打工妹	working daughter
dai tou ren 帶頭人	those who playing a leading role
dan xiao ru shu 膽小如鼠	as timid as mouse, i.e. chicken hearted
dangbing 當兵	join the army
dangguan jiaohua lan zuoguan 當慣叫化懶做官	a beggar cannot adapt to be an official
danwei 單位	work unit
danxiao pashi 膽小怕事	timid and overcautious
dapao 大炮	big gun
dashi 大事	important events and ceremonies
dawu 大屋	big house
difang ganbu 地方幹部	local cadres
difang shuishou 地方稅收	local revenue
dingchan 定產	unified production quota
diu lian 丟臉	losing face
DongFang Hong 東方紅	The East is Red
Dongfang 東方	Eastern Wind
dongluan 動亂	chaos
dongyuan 動員	mobilize
doufang 斗方	the bracket for supporting a block of wood
du gui 賭鬼	gamble ghost
du 賭	gambling
duanzi juesun 斷子絕孫	stop the family line
dun wu 頓悟	enlightenment
duolao duode 多勞多得	more you work, more you get

en ren 恩人	benefactor
fan liangfan 翻兩翻	four times
fazhan 發展	development
fenghong 分紅	dividend
fengjian canyu 封建殘餘	residue of feudalism
fengjian zhidu 封建制度	feudal system
fengshui xiansheng 風水先生	specialist of fengshui
fengshui 風水	geomagnetic omen
fengtiao yushun 風調雨順	good weather for the crops
fengyi zushi 豐衣足食	well-fed and well-clothed
fenshu xian 分數線	marking line
fentian daohu 分田到戶	dividing the land to individual household
fu lian 婦聯	women's federation
fu 府	prefecture
fumin zhengce 富民政策	the policy let people making money
fumu yangyu zhi en 父母養育之恩	parents' kindness of rearing
funong 富農	upper-middle peasant
gaige kaifang 改革開放	reform and open door policy
gan ji 趕集	go to the periodic market
ganbu 幹部	cadres
gannu er bugan yan 敢怒而不敢言	forced to keep their resentment to themselves
ganqing 感情	human feeling, affection
ganqun guanxi 干群關係	relationship between the cadres and the public
gaochao 高潮	high tide
gaohao guanxi 搞好關係	maintaining good personal relationship
gaojia shu 高價書	high priced education
gaokao 高考	examination for entering university
ge ziben zhuyi weiba 割資本主義尾巴	cutting the tail of capitalism
gen 根	roots
Gong Shang Ju 工商局	Industrial and Commercial Bureau
gong shuo gong you li, po shuo po you li 公說公有理，婆說婆有理	each party insists they are right
gong zuo dui 工作隊	working team
gong 公	public
gongchandang 共產黨	Communist Party
gongfeng 工分	working points
gongliang 公糧	agricultural tax or tax grain
gongmin yishi 公民意識	consciousness of citizenship
gongmin 公民	citizen
gongping 公平	fair or equity
gongren 工人	worker
gongshe de shihou 公社的時候	Commune era
gongshe 公社	commune
gongsi heying 公私合營	integrating of private and public enterprise
Gongwang 公王	god of mountain

gongzuo he zeren 工作和責任	duties and responsibilities
gu wei jin yong 古為今用	making the past serve for the present
gua zhi 掛紙	worshipping the ancestors
guan ka 關卡	checking point
guanbi minfan 官逼民反	the official exploitation will make the people rebel
guangrong 光榮	glory
guanliao zuofeng 官僚作風	bureaucratic style of work
guanli qu wei yuan hui 管理區委員會	administrative districts committee
guanli qu 管理區	administrative districts
guanshan goujie 官商勾結	collusion between the official and businessmen
guanxi wang 關係網	personal connection network
guanxi	relation, personal connection, social networks, or
關係	personal relationship
Guanyin 觀音	god of Buddhism
gugan fezi 骨幹份子	back-bone element
guhun yegui 孤魂野鬼	the hungry ghost without offerings
gui zhuyi 鬼主意	wicked idea
guisu 歸屬	home to return
gunong 僱農	farm labourers
guojia ganbu 國家幹部	state cadres
guojia 國家	state
Guomingdang 國民黨	Nationalist Party
guoshi 過時	outdated
haiwai guanxi 海外關係	overseas network
han di 旱地	dry land
hao shichen 好時辰	good hour
he shang 和尚	monk
hei wulei 黑五類	black five categorized
hekou bogong 河口伯公	god of river
heli de shui 合理的稅	reasonable tax
henpi 橫批	a horizontal sprolling bearing on inscription
hong wei bin 紅衛兵	red guard
hongbao 紅包	monetary gift; red pocket money
hongqi 紅旗	Red Flag
huahong 花紅	bonus
huaqiao 華僑	overseas Chinese
huayan qiaoyu 花言巧語	sweet words
hukou system 戶口制度	household registration
huo bu dan xing 禍不單行	double troubles
huowu chumen, shu bu tuihuo	goods can't return after leaving the store
貨物出門，恕不退貨	
huzhuzu 互助組	mutual aid groups
jiceng jianshi 基層建設	local construction
ji liang 技倆	bad way
ji ri 吉日	lucky day

ji shi 吉時	good time
jianju xiang 檢舉箱	boxes for accusation letters
jian qian yan kai 見錢開眼	money make the eye open
jianchi si xian yuan ze 堅持四項原則	insisting four principles
jiangjing 獎金	money award/ bonus
jiangqin falan 獎勤罰懶	award the hard worker and punish the laziness
jiao huan 交換	exchange
jiao xin 交心	heart-to-heart talk
jiaoyu liang 教育糧	education grain
jiaoyu 教育	education
jiang yitao, zuo yitao 講一套，做一套	says one thing and does another
jiaxiang techan 家鄉特產	home-make or local product
jiben kouliang 基本口糧	basic grain, basic ration
jiefangjun 解放軍	liberation army
jihua shengyu 計劃生育	family planning
jjing 基金	fund
JiLu JianCha Wei Yuan Hui 紀律檢查委員會	Commission For Inspecting Discipline
jin sheng 今生	this life
jingkuan 鏡框	glass-framed artwork
jinglao yuan 敬老院	old people's home
jinshi 進士	scholar passing the highest imperial examination
jiu guanliao 舊官僚	old bureaucracy
jiu shehui 舊社會	old society
jiusi fushang 救死扶傷	save the death and heal the ill
jujiao kuanxiang 拒交款項	rejecting the imposed fee
kai guan dian yan 開光點眼	rituals of consecration of the god
kai huang zhongguo 開荒種果	opening out the wasteland and planting fruit tree
kaiwang xiao 開玩笑	cracking a joke
kanbing 看病	seeing a doctor
kangshui zhe 抗稅者	people who reject to pay taxes
kangshui 抗稅	refusing to pay taxes
kao zi ji 靠自己	relying on their own efforts
kejiaren 客家人	Hakkas
keqi 客氣	modest
koutou 叩頭	kowtow
kouxin 口信	oral message
kuiben shengyi 虧本生意	losing proposition
kun nan hu 困難戶	economically distressed household
lai sheng 來生	next life
lao ren zhi jia 老人之家	recreation center of the elders / elder's centre
li shi zhang 理事長	director
li 禮	integrity
liang 糧	grain

lianjie 諒解	understanding the situation
lianluo ganqing 聯絡感情	maintaining a good relationship
lianzu 聯組	big mutual-aid team
libu 吏部	the Ministry of Official Personnel Affair
limao 禮貌	courtesy or politeness
lingjiu 靈柩	coffin containing a corpse
lingtang 靈堂	mourning hall
linyong 領養	adopted heir
lishi zuiren 歷史罪人	the sinner of the history
lishi 歷史	history
liwu 禮物	gifts
longtou 龍頭	dragon head i.e. major
luan 亂	chao
lun 倫	proper human relationship
luohou zhengzhi juewu 落後政治覺悟	backward political consciousness
luohou 落後	backward
luoye guigen 落葉歸根	the fallen leaves have to return to their roots
man tou 饅頭	bread
mangliu 盲流	blind flow
mei chuxi 沒出息	without future
meijing 沒勁	lackadaisical
mei wenhua, mei shuiping 沒文化，沒水平	lacking of education, lacking of art of leadership
meimeng nanyuan 美夢難圓	fond dream difficult to become true
meinai de ma 沒奶的媽	the mother without milk
meiyisi 沒意思	meaningless
meiyong 沒用	useless
meiyou qian 沒有錢	no money
men lian 門聯	gate couplet
menlou 門樓	the arch over the gateway
mianzi 面子	face or social honor
ming bu fu shi 名不符實	the name does not match the reality
mingong chao 民工潮	tide of migrant labour
mingqiang yiduo, anjian nanfang 明槍易躲，暗箭難防	it is easy to dodge a spear in the open, but hard to guard against an arrow shot from hiding
minzhu zhengquan 民主政權	democratic regime
mixin zhiyezhe 迷信職業者	specialist for religion
mixin 迷信	superstition
nashui hu 納稅戶	tax-paid household
neimu xiaoxi 內幕消息	inside stories
ni de 你的	yours
ni gu 尼姑	Buddhist nun
nian shen 年審	yearly exam and renew
nong hui 農會	the Farmer Association
nong zhuanfei 農轉非	change rural residence status to urban one

nongcun 農村	rural or countryside
nongmang 農忙	busy season
nongmin yijiao niufen 農民一腳牛糞	peasant's leg is filled with cow dung
nongmin 農民	peasant or farmer
nongxia 農閑	slack season
nongye shengchan 農業生產	agricultural production
pai chu suo 派出所	local police station
paocha 泡茶	making tea
pengyou 朋友	friends
pian si ren 騙死人	cheat the dead
piao 嫖	prostitution
pima daixiao 披麻帶孝	the gunny draped over their shoulders
pingbei 朋輩	the same generation
pinkun diqu 貧困地區	poor-difficult region
pinkun shanqu 貧苦山區	poor mountain region
pinnong 貧農	poor peasant
pinqiong xian 貧窮線	basic line of poverty
po si jiu 破四舊	destroying the Four Old Model customs
pochan dizhu 破產地主	bankrupt landlords
pochuqu de shui 潑出去的水	spilled out water
pojiu lixin 破舊立新	destroying the old and establishing the new
putong gongren 普通工人	ordinary worker
qi shan pa e 欺善怕惡	bully the weak and fear the strong
qiang gan zi 槍桿子	gun
qiao liang 橋樑	bridge
qiaoluo dagu 敲鑼打鼓	beat the drums and strike the gongs
qiaoxiang 僑鄉	native homes of overseas Chinese
qifen gong, sanfen guo 七分功，三分過	70% merits and 30% faults
qing lai li wang 情來禮往	human affection comes, gifts must return
qing yuan 清園	clear the garden
qing 情	affection
qingke 請客	banquets-giving
qingqi 親戚	relatives
qingtie 請貼	formal invitation
queli 缺禮	act without proprieties
qun zhong pidou dahui 群眾批鬥會	mass struggle meeting
quxie bixiong 驅邪避凶	driving out the evil and avoiding ill luck
re nao 熱鬧	heat and noise
Remin Dahui Tang 人民大會堂	People's Conference Hall
reminbi 人民幣	Chinese currency
ren pa chuming, zhu pa fei 人怕出名，豬怕肥	men are afraid of becoming famous, pigs are afraid of becoming fat
renchao 熱潮	great mass fervor
Renda 人大	People's Representative Congress

renmin jie fang jun 人民解放軍	People's Liberation Army
renqing 人情	sentiment and human feeling
renzheng 仁政	policy of benevolence
renzhi changqing 人之常情	the way of the world
renzu guizong 認祖歸宗	acknowledging their ancestor and roots
ru hu 入戶	registered
rubu fuzhi 入不敷支	income failing short of expenditure
san luan 三亂	three unreasonable fee collection
san sheng 三牲	three kinds of meat
san tong 三通	three together
san zuo da shan 三座大山	three big mountains -- imperialism, feudalism, and
shangao huangdi yuan 山高皇帝遠	the mountain is high and the emperor is far away
Shangshu 尙書	Minister
shangyou zhengce, xiayou duice 上有政策，下有對策	those above have policy, those below have their counter-measure
shehui fengqi 社會風氣	social conduct
shehui zhuyi 社會主義	socialism
shen kan 神龕	shrine
shengsi 生死	life and death
sheng bu bu, shi bu shou 生不補，死不收	no additional land to the new born, no confiscation of the death
sheng bu dailai, si bu daiqu 生不帶來，死不帶去	bring nothing to this world and bring nothing back
sheng yi 生意	business
sheng zhengfu 省政府	provincial government
Sheng 省	Province
shengchan dui 生產隊	production team
shengchan guanxi 生產關係	production relation
shenren ba shidi 生人霸死地	the live man occupy the dead land, i.e. greedy
shi bu guan ji, ji bu lao xin 事不關己，己不勞心	don't care other's business
shi fen mang 十分忙	being very busy
shi yu yuan wei 事與願違	things do not always turn out the way one wished
Shi 市	City
shiye 事業	career
shougongyi zhe 手工藝者	craft artists
shuangchong shui 雙重稅	double taxes
shuangjiang 霜降	Frost's Descent-18th solar term
shui huo 水貨	fake
shui shen huo re 水深火熱	deep water and scorching fire i.e. an abyss of suffering
shui tian 水田	wet fields
si po lian pi 撕破臉皮	break other's skin of face, i.e. make other feel embarrassed
si ren bang 四人幫	Gang of Four

si 私	private
sihai zhinei jie xiongdi 四海之內皆兄弟	all are brothers at all corners of the land
siqing 四清	Four Cleanups
sixiang baofu 思想包袱	a weight on one's mind
sixiang luohou 思想落後	ideologically backward
siyou caichan 私有財產	private property
songli 送禮	gift giving
tai bu qi tou 抬不起頭	could not rise their head
tang lian 堂聯	hall couplet
tantian shuodi 談天說地	chatting about heaven and earth
tanwu 貪污	corruption
tao shui 逃稅	taxes evasion
taoshui zhe 逃稅者	people who evade taxes
tewu 特務	spy
tian mian 天面	skylight
tianqi xinyun zude chongguang 天啓新運祖德重光	god's new blessing makes the virtue of ancestor shine again
tie fan wan 鐵飯碗	iron bowl
tong yihuo 同一伙	same group
tong zhi 通知	announcement
tonggou 統購	unified purchase quota
tongsheng 通勝	almanac
tongxiang 同鄉	fellow villagers
tongxiao 統銷	unified sale quota
toupo xueliu 頭破血流	head broken and bleeding
tu huangdi 土皇帝	local emperor
tu ku shui 吐苦水	speak one's unhappiness
tu zhengce 土政策	local policy
tudi gong 土地公	earth god
tufei 土匪	bandits
tugai 土改	land reform
tuo ping 脫貧	walk out of poverty
wan yuan hu 萬元戶	ten thousand yuan peasant household
wei da 偉大	great
wei ping 圍坪	threshing ground
weixing dianshi 衛星電視	satellite TV
wenhua dageming 文化大革命	Cultural Revolution
wenming jianshe 文明建設	construction of spiritual civilization
wo de 我的	mine
wu ji lu 無紀律	no discipline
wubao hu 五保戶	five guarantees household
wubao liang 五保糧	five guarantees grain
xishui wanyan liu wangu, xiluan junqiao wei quancu 溪水蜿蜒流萬古，西巒峻峭衛全村	the meandering stream run through forever, the high and steep mountain protect the whole village

xian 縣	county
xiang / zhen 鄉/鎮	township
xiangqin 鄉親	fellow villager
xiangxia ren 鄉下人	country folk
xianjing 先進	advanced
xianxing fa geming 現行反革命	counter-revolutionaries
xiaobao 小報	small-sized newspaper
xiao shun 孝順	filial piety
xiaofan 小販	small peddlers
xiaomo shijian 消磨時間	whiling away their time
xiao you wei jiazheng, wen zhang bao guoen 孝友爲家政，文章報國恩	repay the family's debt of rearing with piety, requite nation's debt of gratitude with essay
xin zhong guo 新中國	new China
xin 信	sincerity
Xing Zheng Cun / guanliqu 行政村/管理區	Administrative Village or District
xingan baobei 心肝寶貝	as precious as his heart
Xingbu 刑部	Ministry of Punishment
xingzheng cuoshi 行政措施	administrative measure
xingzheng shouduan 行政手段	the rigorous administrative measure
xingzheng zeren 行政責任	administrative tasks
xu 序	order
xuanchuan yue 宣傳月	propaganda month
Xue Da-zhai 學大寨	learning the model of Dazhai
xuehan qian 血汗錢	blood and sweat money
xuri 墟日	periodic market day
ya sui qian 壓歲錢	money giving to children in Chinese New Year
Yamen 衙門	local government
yan da 嚴打	seriously attack
yang feng yin wei 陽奉陰違	overtly agree but covertly oppose or feign compliance
yangyu zhi en 養育之恩	kindness of rearing
ye mang 野蠻	savage
yi liang wei gan 以糧爲綱	mono rice production
yi zhi yan kai, yi zhi yan bi 一隻眼開，一隻眼閉	one eye open and one eye closed
yibeizi aiqiong 一輩子挨窮	poverty in a life time
yichang huanxi yichang kong 一場歡喜一場空	one's hope come to naught
yiku sitian 憶苦思甜	recalling past suffering and think over the source of present
ying peng ying 硬碰硬	confront the tough with toughness
yingyang buliang 營養不良	lacking nutrient
yingjian 陰間	life after death or hell
yiqian 以前	before

yiwu 義務	duty
you bijiao jiu zhidao 有比較就知道	comparison makes things clear
you bing 有病	sick
you qian neng shi gui tui mo 有錢能使鬼推磨	money can make the ghost turn the millstone
you qing you yi 有情有義	having human sentiment and having righteousness
you qiu bi ying 有求必應	all requests shall be answered
you yan qian 油鹽錢	salt and oil money, i.e. basic expenditure
youdai liang 優待糧	favouring treatment grain
youji dui 游擊隊	guerrilla force
youji zhanshu 游擊戰術	guerrilla strategies
youqian haobanshi 有錢好辦事	money can make the things easily done
yue fa san zhang 約法三章	agreement on a three-point law
yuliang 餘糧	surplus grain
yunshu 運數	fortune
Zaixiang 宰相	Prime Minister
zaoyang 遭殃	suffer disaster
zengzufu 曾祖父	great-grandfather
zeren 責任	responsibility or obligation
zhao biao 招標	inviting tender
zhao gu 照顧	preferential treatment
zhao qian 照牆	the enclosing wall
zhao xu 招婿	seeking a husband to live in wife's house
zhen zhengfu 鎮政府	township government
zhengfu 政府	government
zhengjing heyi 政經合一	integrating government administrative and economic management
zhengming 證明	certificate
zhenya fangeming 鎮壓反革命	suppressing counter-revolutionary elements
zhifu 致富	becoming wealthy
zhishi shuiping 知識水平	level of education
zhong 種	seed
zhongqiu 中秋	mid-autumn festival
zhongyang shuishou 中央稅收	central revenue
zhongyang zhengfu 中央政府	central government
zhuan qian 賺錢	making money
zhuzhang shengshi 助長聲勢	making the support
ziben zhuyi weiba 資本主義尾巴	the tail of capitalism
ziji ren 自己人	one of us
zija de shi 自家的事	my own business
ziliu di 自留地	garden plot
zou houmen 走後門	walking through the back door
zou huitou lu 走回頭路	taking the road back to old society
zou ziben zuyi daolu 走資本主義道路	walking on the road of capitalism
zu pu 族譜	genealogy

zugong ting 祖公廳	ancestral hall
zui xiajian 最下賤	the lowest category
zui xian 醉仙	drunk god
zuo sixiang gongzuo 做思想工作	doing ideological work
zuoshang fen Zhuang 桌上分贓	divided the land on the table
zuxian lingwei 祖先靈位	ancestor's tablets

Slogans

aiguo aishui, shuli dishui xin xingxiang 愛國愛稅，樹立地稅新思想	love the country, love the tax; establish the new image of local tax
fan zibenzhuyi zhi you hua 反資本主義自由化	Anti-Capitalist Liberation
fayang tuanjie zhandou de jingshen 發展團結戰鬥的精神	Carrying forward the spirit of solidarity and militancy
jiaona shuifei guangrong, toulou shuifei kechi 交納稅費光榮，偷漏稅費可恥	It is honour to pay tax and fees, shameful to evade tax and fees
maozhuxi wansui 毛主席萬歲	Long long live Chairman Mao
ni jingying wo zhichi, ni zhuanqian wo shoushui 你經營我支持，你賺錢我收稅	You do the business, I support; you make the money, I collect the tax
qianwan buyao wanji jieji douzhen 千萬不要忘記階級鬥爭	Never forget the class struggle
quanshijie renmin datuanjie wansui 全世界人民大團結萬歲	Long long live the great union of the people of the world
reai dishui, zuo kua shiji rencai 熱愛地稅，做跨世紀人才	loving the local tax, becoming the talent of crossing century
renming gongshe hao 人民公社好	People's Commune is good
shehui zhuyi wenming jianshi 社會主義文明建設	Construction of Socialist Civilization
shoufa jingying, zhaodang nashui 守法經營，照單納稅	doing the business in accordance to law, paying the tax based on regulation
shouru zhongdan dajia tiao, renren jianshang you zhibiao 收入重擔大家挑，人人肩上有指標	everyone have to share the heavy burden of state revenue, everyone's shoulder have to bear the quota
shuishou renmin de shuishou, guojia de shuishou 稅收人民的稅收，國家的稅收	tax revenue, people's tax revenue, state's tax revenue
toupiao shi mei yige gongmin yingyou de yiwu he quanli 投票是每一個公民應有的義務和權利	voting is obligation and right of every citizen
tuanjie jingzhang yanshu huopo 團結緊張嚴肅活潑	Be united, alert, earnest and lively
tuanjie jiushi liliang 團結就是力量	Unity is strength

tuanjie yiqie keyi tuanjie de lilian
 團結一切可以團結的力量
 tuanjie zai dangzhongyang zhouwei
 團結在黨中央周圍
 wei remi fuwu 為人民服務
 xuanju ziji de renda daibiao
 選舉你自己的人大代表
 yao zhifu, zhong guoshu
 要治富，種果樹
 yikao pingnong, tuanjie zhongnong
 依靠貧農，團結中農
 yiqie wei geming
 一切為革命
 yongyuan ganggeming
 永遠幹革命
 zhongguo gongchandang wansui
 中國共產黨萬歲
 zichan jieji geren zhuyi
 資產階級個人主義
 zili gengsheng
 自力更生

Unite with all the forces that can be united
 Rally around the Party's Central Committee
 serving the people
 electing your own representative of people's congress
 want to get rich, plant fruit tree
 relying on poor peasants, uniting middle peasants
 All for revolution
 Carry the revolution through to the end
 Long long live Chinese Communist Party
 capitalist or bourgeois individualism
 Self reliance

Appendix 4. Note on Measures and Transliteration

1 *mu* = 1/15 hectares = 1/6 acre

10 *fen* = 1 *mu*

fen and *mu* are the units of area

1 *jin* = 0.5 kilogram = 1.1 pounds

1 *jin* = 0.5 kilograms = 1.1 pounds

1 *dan* = 100 *jin*

1 *liang* = 50 gram

liang and *jin* is a unit of weight

1 *yuan* = 10 *mao/jiao*

1 *mao* = 10 *fen*

1 *yuan* = U. S \$ 0.3 or 0.08 pound

yuan, *mao/jiao*, and *fen* are the units of currency

1 *chi* = 1/3 meter

chi is the unit of length

All transliteration of Chinese terms is in the *pinyin* system of organisation of Mandarin.

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